

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

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THE BEAST IN THE DINGLE BY JAMES THURBER

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THOMAS MERTON

SONG

When rain, (sings light) rain has devoured my house
And wind wades through my trees,
The cedars fawn upon the storm with their huge paws.
Silence is louder than a cyclone
In the rude door, my shelter.
And there I eat my air alone
With pure and solitary songs.

While others sit in conference.
Their windows grieve, and soon frown
And glass begins to wrinkle with a multitude of water
'Til I no longer see their speech
And they no longer know my theater.

Rivers clothe their houses
And hide their naked wisdom.
Their conversations
Go down into the deep like submarines:
Submerge them, with their pale expressions, in my storm.

But I drink rain, drink wind
Distinguish poems
Boiling up out of the cold forest:
Lift to the wind my eyes full of water
And my face, and my mind, to take their free refreshment.

Thus I live upon my own land, my own island
And speak to God, my God, under the doorway
When rain, (sings light) rain has devoured my house
And winds wade through my trees.

KATHLEEN RAINE

EX NIHILO

OUT of nothing we are made,
Our cities rise upon the void,

And in chromium-plated bars
Shadows drink eternal tears.

Women's transient fingers pass
Over silks and flowers and glass,

Cameras and motor-cars
Spin on the hub of nothingness
On which revolve the years and stars.

Beyond the houses and the fields
Rise the forest-shrouded hills

And upon each leaf is traced
The pattern of the eternal mind
That summons kingdoms from the dust.

Above the forests lie the clouds,
White fields where the soaring sight
Rests on the air's circumference,

And distant constellations move
About the centre of a thought,
By the fiat of that love

Whose being is the breath of life,
The terra firma that we tread,
The divine body that we eat,
The incarnation that we live.

KATHLEEN RAINE

POEM

Learn, if I dare, the order of the wind,
Fire, tempest and the sea.
Learn if I dare into what mode of being
The leaf falls from the tree.

Everywhere
There are holes in the air,
Graves open to receive us,

After the seventh colour
And before the first
Lies darkness.

Beyond sound, silence
Audible to bats,
And deep sea fish that feel the throb of waves,

Beyond sense, the spinning spheres,
Atoms and stars
That weave our lives.

Lovers seek sanctuary
In the abyss
From which they fly,

For in love's depths we sound
The void
Beyond mortality

And through our sleep
Move latent powers
Strange as nebulae,

Dreams not ours.

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

THE LOVE OF DEATH

PROFESSOR JOAD has defined decadence as 'dropping the object' and has complained that today psychologists will never allow us to ask 'What is true?' but always insist in asking instead, 'Why does he say that?' He is to a degree justified in his complaint. A world which has lost the sense that there is such a thing as truth is certainly a world adrift. We should be the stronger if we could recapture some of the Victorian simplicity of Arthur Hugh Clough, and be able to say again

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I falter, truth is so.

Yet there is a problem of error, even though it be only a secondary problem. If reason is infallible, as, strictly speaking, it must be in a rational universe—*la raison a toujours raison*—and if men have reason, then we are entitled to ask how it is that men come to err. Error is an oddity, and of every error there must be a particular explanation, and the psychologist, though he may have little valuable to tell us when he is dealing with a patient who is right, can properly be cited in evidence when he is dealing with a patient who is wrong.

It was here, rather than in the realm of economics, that Marx made his truly original contribution. The nineteenth century was all too ready to rest content in its naïve Gilbertian faith that

Every boy and every gal
That's born into this world alive
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative,

and did not ask why some were Liberals and why some were Conservatives. Marx showed his to be a deeper mind than that of his contemporaries in so far as he was not content merely to record that people did have different opinions but went on to ask why they had such different opinions. It is true that Marx's psychological explanation was almost unbearably crude. No one who for a moment contemplates the almost infinite varieties of

English snobbery, the bewildering confusion of human motives, of actions and interactions, can seriously believe that the economic motive is the sole motive which sways human opinion and human conduct. How was it, for instance, to the economic advantage of St. Peter to be crucified head downwards? Yet, if Marx did not give the full psychological explanation, he is at least to be praised in so far as he tried to give a psychological explanation at all. Deeper minds—Dostoevski in literature, Adler and Jung on the more technical plane—coming after him, have since made mature what he left adolescent.

Nothing is more commonly oversimplified, and more in need of subtle elucidation, than the attitude of man towards death. There are many who think that all has been said that needs to be said when it is recorded that the strongest of all human instincts is the instinct of self-preservation. This is far from so. The truism is indeed, as far as it goes, true enough. It is true enough that at any given moment with but the rarest exceptions any man or woman, if offered the choice between life and death, would choose life. A simple statistical test is sufficient to demonstrate that. We all of us spend many more moments in our life not committing suicide than committing it.

Yet we cannot dismiss this problem as a mere problem of choice between black and white, between life and death. For it is obvious that of those who choose life, to many of them life is only tolerable so long as they are continually risking it. They do not indeed wish to die, any more than the gambler wishes to back a loser. But, just as the gambler deliberately chooses a life in which he knows that he is certain sooner or later to lose, so many men—those Nietzscheans, who like to 'live dangerously'—deliberately chose a life in which they know that it is at any rate highly probable that, sooner or later, and far sooner than would be naturally inevitable, they will meet with death. Put one way, put in terms of the choice of a particular moment, the maxim about the instinct of self-preservation is certainly true. Put in another way, it is certainly false. It is certain that, if the most authoritative statistics could be produced showing the actuarial expectation of every form of life, by no means the whole of the human race would choose those forms which promised to be most long-lived.

There is another psychological problem which the crude maxim ignores. Few people want positively and immediately to die.

Some like to risk life by facing 'objective physical risks. Many more like to toy with the idea of death. They are, as Keats most accurately put it, 'half in love with easeful death'. It may be that, if death took them at their word and answered to their challenge, they would draw back at the moment of crisis. But their general habit is to prefer death to life, half-unconsciously to welcome events in the world around or in their own lives which are likely to make death, even their own death, more probable, so long as they are still left merely to toy with the notion and not quite taken at their word.

In its extreme form this yearning for death is a well-known state of pathological disease. In the world of capital punishment, for instance, the demand for hanging greatly outruns the supply. It is notorious that in every murder case many people quite unconnected with the crime make confessions of the murder, hoping to obtain for themselves the publicity of a trial. I tried to get the precise figures of this curious habit out of Mr. Chuter Ede, but they were not available. He admitted that instances of it had come to his notice in cases which he had had to review as Home Secretary. Obviously no one suggests of these mongers of ersatz confessions that they would not be more than a little surprised and more than a little shocked if the authorities were to take them at their word and they were to find themselves being hanged for crimes with which they were quite unconnected except in imagination. But they like to toy with the idea of being hanged. In the same way many a real murderer is probably—certainly, Dr. Jung would say—encouraged to commit his murder by the thought of hanging. It is not that he likes being hanged, when and if it comes to the hanging. But he likes to think about being hanged, to stimulate himself with the idea of being hanged at a time when he does not think that he really will be hanged.

It is very much with the murderer as with the schoolboy. Few schoolboys are so eccentric as to enjoy being beaten. Few schoolboys would defy a rule, where detection was certain and where punishment was the certain consequence of detection. There would be then, as they would say, no fun in it. In that purely formal sense corporal punishment is a deterrent. But there are many schoolboys who enjoy the thought of being beaten, who enjoy the thrill of being in a state where detection would lead to a beating. It is not that they enjoy the beating, but it is

precisely because they dislike the beating that they enjoy the thrill of risking it. Again we cannot judge the balance of deterrence and encouragement in corporal punishment by looking solely at the victim. We have to allow for the general interest aroused by it in the whole schoolboy society. We have to recognize that, for better or for worse, it makes rule-breaking at school more interesting.

So, too, with capital punishment. It is naïve to think that we can solve the problem of murder simply by punishing the murderer. As Dr. Jung has written, 'The sensation which every crime arouses, the passionate interest shown in tracking down the criminal, the eagerness with which the trial in court is followed, all go to prove that crime has a peculiarly exciting effect on practically everybody who is not abnormally dull and apathetic. People seem to move with it, to feel themselves into it, they try to grasp it and explain it. Something has been set alight in them and this something is a part of the great fire of evil which has flared up in the crime. Was not Plato aware, all those centuries ago, that the sight of something ugly produces something ugly in the psyche? Indignation leaps up, angry cries of "Justice!" pursue the murderer, and they are louder, more passionate, more charged with hate, the more fiercely the spark of evil glows in one's soul. It is a fact which cannot be denied: the wickedness of others instantly becomes our own wickedness, because it kindles evil in our own soul. The murder has been partly suffered by everyone, and everyone has also partly committed it. Drawn by the irresistible fascination of evil, we have helped to make this partial collective psychic murder possible; and the closer we stood to it and the better our view, the greater our share. In this way, we are unavoidably drawn into the uncleanness of evil, no matter what line our consciousness may take. Our very moral indignation is a sign that evil has lit a fire in our heart, and the more fiercely this fire burns the more poisonous and revengeful we shall be. No one need hope to escape this fact, for everyone of us is a human being and part of the human community; so much so that no single crime can fail to call forth a secret satisfaction in some corner of our many-sided and iridescent psyche. It is true that, in the case of a person endowed with strong moral faculties, this reaction brings about a contrary one in the neighbouring compartments of the psyche. Unfortunately, a strong

feeling for morality is relatively rare, so that when crime is on the increase, indignation may easily allow itself to be overruled and evil then becomes the order of the day. For everybody harbours his "statistical" criminal in himself, just as he has a corresponding madman or saint. Owing to this general human predisposition a corresponding suggestibility, or susceptibility to infection, exists everywhere. It is our time—the last half-century—that is particularly responsible for having paved the way for crime. Has it never occurred to anybody, for instance, that the general vogue of the detective story has a rather questionable side?’

It follows from this argument—and the conclusion is a logical one—that the true way to stop murder is to make it dull. The battle will be won not by alteration or by retention of particular penalties, imposed merely on the murderer, but by discovering means to turn public opinion at large from its morbid obsession with murder. But the battle is a difficult one at the present day because of the widespread lurking, subconscious envy in the public mind both of the victim and of the murderer. This envy is, it is true, combined in schizophrenic fashion with other and directly opposite emotions, but among the responses to the reading of a murder story one is undoubtedly ‘She’s lucky to be out of it’, and another is ‘I wonder if I should ever have had the nerve to do that?’

We are sometimes told that these odd perversions are a special product of our sterile, sophisticated age and that they were less known among our simpler, ruder ancestors with their fecund birthrates. It may be so—or it may not be so. Anyone who reads *Barnaby Rudge* or *Porphyria’s Lover* will find it difficult to believe that there is much, save perhaps a few technical terms, which we could teach our Victorian grandparents about the inner secrets of sadism or masochism, and the student of Dostoievski can hardly believe that a high birthrate, as in nineteenth-century Russia, was in itself an automatic cure for unnatural desires. Yet there certainly is a pulse in the love of life and in its converse, the fascination of death, which rises and falls as the generations change, and there is every reason to think that the trinity of low birthrate, the obsession with death and the lack of a philosophy and a belief in a future life do in a general way go together. Obviously the sane thing is neither to fear death nor to be obsessed with it, neither the gas chamber nor Forest Lawns. The sane thing is to

accept it without fuss whenever it may happen to come, not greatly caring whether it comes soon or late. A foolish generation both fears it and is obsessed with it, and, when it fears it too much and knows that it cannot escape it sooner or later, it comes in sheer panic to choose it sooner rather than later so as to get it over, just as the nervous soldier shoots off his bullet before zero hour because he can no longer endure the waiting. As Jung has written, 'In lunatic asylums it is a well-known fact that patients are far more dangerous when suffering from fear than when moved by wrath or hatred'. And, after all, what is the modern world but a gigantic lunatic asylum?

The debates of the last months in the two Houses of Parliament on the suspension of the death penalty have been as unsatisfying in themselves as they have been in their result. The first debate in the Commons in which the broad principle was faced and discussed was incomparably the best. All the others were bewildered by confusion. As on Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*, the 'ignorant armies clashed by night', and of all the witnesses none were more inexpert than the so-called expert. For judges and statesmen, bishops and seasoned administrators, though they had much that was incidentally interesting to tell us, yet never attempted to face the fundamental question, 'Is the death sentence a deterrent?' Not only did they betray no evidence of acquaintance with the vast mass of expert evidence that has been amassed in the last eighteen years in Sweden, Switzerland and other countries on the psychiatric treatment of murderers. They did not betray the slightest indication that they were even aware that such evidence existed. The High Court of Parliament reminded one of nothing so much as of Galileo's judges, and it was sometimes those who should have been the most responsible who appeared to pay least heed to the truth that to create an atmosphere of public excitement and hysteria was to create an atmosphere which was by all modern medical evidence in itself only too likely to increase the number of murders.

We were told by many speakers that we had passed beyond what Sir John Anderson not very happily called 'primitive notions of atonement' and that the death penalty could only be justified as a deterrent. But it was left to Lord Templewood to say that the principle that all things were justified by the supreme law of the benefit of society was a dangerously totalitarian principle, and it

was left to Sir Hartley Shawcross to show that the principle of deterrence, unbalanced by any other principle, logically led to consequences far beyond those of the mere maintenance of the death penalty. For instance, it is highly doubtful how far the death in the death penalty is deterrent. It is most arguable that the deterrent in hanging is not in the death but in the accompanying circumstances. If deterrence is all that matters, there is obviously a great deal to be said for the reintroduction of torture. Or again, Lord Samuel was prominent in his demand for the retention of capital punishment for political assassination. Again there is a strong case for it that the execution of the assassin, drugged by his own fanatical faith, would be quite ineffective as a deterrent, but that to execute somebody else, an innocent, his wife or children or hostages, might well be effective. Other regimes have been quite ready to apply their principles with this hateful logic. We in this country are fortunately not prepared to do so. There are some injustices so horrible that we would sooner die than commit them. This is indeed a sign of grace, but it proves that, whatever we may think, deterrence is fortunately not the only principle upon which we act.

Mr. Quintin Hogg, an opponent of abolition, cogently showed the inherent difficulty in compromising on this topic. It is a difficulty that is entirely to the honour of both sides. On both sides there is a recognition of the sanctity of human life, but this recognition obviously leads one to precisely opposite practical conclusions according to whether one does or does not believe capital punishment to be a deterrent. If it is a deterrent, then the principle of the sanctity of human life naturally makes one uneasy before any proposal to abate it at all, and, if it is not a deterrent, then the principle of the sanctity of human life makes one uneasy before any proposal to retain it for any murders of any sort. The majority of the Members of the House of Commons who voted for the abolition of capital punishment were probably humanitarians who were primarily concerned with humanity to the murderer, and indeed such a world as this is no place in which to sneer at humanitarianism. We have no reason to be ashamed of the contrast between such humanitarianism and the gathering beastliness of the world around us. Yet our first business with murderers must be that they should be as few as possible. It is idle to expect the conscientious supporter of capital punishment to

surrender before a mere description of the horrors of execution for the murderer, and equally idle to expect its opponent to surrender before a mere description of the horrors of murder. The opponent of capital punishment does not deny that murder is horrible. He denies that capital punishment makes it more improbable. Therefore, until there is agreement whether it is a deterrent or not, it is hardly sensible to expect agreement on the method of treatment, and the new clause, which the Government introduced, was a singularly foolish one, based on no principle other than that capital punishment should be retained for those sorts of murder that were most complained about in the newspapers. It had none of the respectable principles of a genuine system of distinction between the premeditated and the unpremeditated murder—difficult as such a principle would be to apply in practice. The Government's proposal was really no more sensible, and it was more difficult to apply, than if they had said, 'We will hang people who commit murders on a Monday and a Friday and let those who commit them on the five other days of the week go free'. Few who had considered it dispassionately could quarrel with the Lords for rejecting it or with the Commons for upholding the Lords' rejection at the second time of asking.

He would be a bold man, who, after studying the record of Parliament on this subject, would prophesy the outcome. On the original free vote the great majority of the Socialist party voted against capital punishment and then voted for it in their opposition to Mr. Greenwood's amendment. The great majority of the Conservative party voted for capital punishment on the free vote and then at the second debate supported Mr. Greenwood's amendment to omit all the words of the new clause after the word 'murder'. This, had it been passed, would have caused the new clause to read, 'During the continuance in force of this section no person shall be sentenced to death for murder'. Why they supported this amendment I am still unable to understand. Apparently they imagined that, if passed, it would make no practical difference, but, if so, they were obviously in error, and, whatever may have been the motives of Members, the fact is that, with these two records, all but about 150 of the 625 Members of Parliament have during the past few months voted both for and against the abolition of capital punishment. It is not an impressive tribute to Parliamentary Government.

That being so, probably the most sensible plan would be that the Home Secretary should continue to reprieve all murderers. (There is, it seems, under the constitution, no reason why he should not reprieve them, so long only as he does not say beforehand that he is going to reprieve them.) At the same time the facts of foreign experience and of modern psychological experience should be discovered and published in this country, and then, when the excitement of public opinion has died down, the question should be reopened and treated as much as possible as the medical question, which it is, and as little as possible as a political question.

Yet it is obviously a waste of time to discuss whether or not people should be hanged and how we are to prevent them from being murdered unless they have first decided that life is better than death. It is this which is today the real difficulty. The one thing that is absolutely certain is that no enactment of a penal law will make an immediate, dramatic change in the number of murders one way or the other. The causes of these things lie deeper than law or administration.

The law that lawyers know about
Is property and land,
But why the leaves are on the trees,
Or honey is the food of bees
Or horses have such tender knees
Or faith survives the worst disease
Or hope is more than what one sees
And charity surpasseth these
They do not understand—

and similarly with the greatest of all such mysteries—the mystery why man—man only and the barracuda among all living things—kills when it is not necessary either for food or in self-defence, and it is difficult to treat with total patience a public opinion which lashes itself to hysteria at the thought of some hundred murders a year, which greets with bored indifference 5,000 to 7,000 deaths a year on the roads, and which waits with fatalistic impassivity for the recurrence of world wars in which, it may be, 70,000 will be killed in a single night and whole nations will go down to irretrievable destruction. Do we want to survive?

Now almost all contemporary discussions on international

politics are, it seems to me, rendered futile through a lack of appreciation of man's changing attitude to death. As we compare the political situation today with that of some previous period, we make allowance for many other and more superficial changes of weapons or geography. We make very little allowance for this far more important change in man himself.

I have lived through two world wars and seem not unlikely to see, at any rate, the opening of a third—an experience that never came to any of my ancestors nor, for that matter, of anybody else's ancestors either, and it does seem to me that the world approached each of these wars in a fundamentally different spirit. First there was the war of 1914. It came at the end of the long ninety-nine years of peace, at the end of the long and exceptional Victorian tranquillity. War for Englishmen for a hundred years had been a distant away-fixture of secondary importance. Even the Continental wars had been by modern standards trivial affairs. Even the habits of peace in those days were peaceful. Bullets killed fewer people than motor-cars kill today, and aeroplanes killed no one—except an eccentric experimenter or two who defiantly asked for death. Half a dozen explorers died at the South Pole and the world rang with the story. The progressives and the Utopians hailed it as an age of peace, but, psychologically speaking, it was too secure. Literature was beginning to betray human impatience at this excessive security, at this world where everyone died in his or her bed. 'Are we never to shed blood again?' asked Stevenson. The answer, as Mr. Asquith used to say, was in the affirmative. War came in 1914, and the crowds in every European capital greeted it with a roar of huge relief.

Of course, what they shouted for was something very different from what they were about to receive. What they expected—on both sides—was a short, sharp campaign, quick victory, the troops back home before Christmas, a few other people killed, for oneself the satisfactory memory in old age that for a while one had been in what could decently be called danger. The long years of mud and trench-warfare they did not foresee. Nor did they foresee that the whole pattern of life would be permanently damaged.

The mood between the wars was a wholly different one. There were no longer any illusions about war nor any illusions about the effect of a new war. On the contrary it was too sweepingly

assumed that another war would mean the immediate end of all civilization. (Or at least we still live in hope that the assumption was too sweeping.) War was thought of now as an unmitigated catastrophe and no price was too large for the avoidance of it. This was the opinion in every country except Germany, which alone, having lost the first war and having been deprived by economic catastrophe of the chance of ease, had—as she so falsely thought—little to lose from war and everything to gain in the satisfaction of her desire for revenge.

The story how the pacifism of the rest of the world in face of the aggressive militancy of the Germans brought on the very war which it was so desperately anxious to avoid, is all too familiar. We are not in this article at all concerned with a political commentary. The only point that I wish to make is that before the outbreak—round about the time of Munich—war seemed to almost all the world a gigantic evil. It certainly seemed so to the people outside Germany and there is evidence that it seemed so to the people inside Germany as well. It may be that the reasons why many people longed for the preservation of peace were not deeply noble reasons, but there was at least a certain tribute to the love of life in their pacifism.

Then the war came. At first it seemed that rumours about the enormous destructiveness of modern war had been somewhat exaggerated. Then it appeared that rumour's only error was in its underestimate of the time that the new weapons required for their perfection. The war was becoming terrifying just when it fortunately ended, but its closing episodes—the final air-raids on Germany, the doodle-bugs and, last of all, Hiroshima—quite forbade its survivors to draw any comforting conclusion that because they survived the last war they are at all likely to survive the next one.

Nor does any one draw that conclusion. This is a world without illusion, but it is also a world without hope. Before 1939 people easily prophesied that another war would be the end of civilization. Some thought that such a war was escapable, others that it was inescapable. But all thought that, if it came, it would be an evil. All wished to avoid it, even when they thought that they could not avoid it. The modern world is, I feel, quite different. Most people in private conversation admit to their belief that a new war is inevitable. They are in no illusion about what it will mean,

but at the same time they have no passion to avoid it. Never can the desire for life have been as low as it is today. Most people admit that there will probably be another war, listen with little emotion to prophecy of new forces which may perhaps wholly disrupt the world, and their only comment is that it would be a good thing if somebody would drop one of those bombs and be done with it. The era which greeted the new dawn with the cry that it was joy to be alive and to be young was very heaven, is in danger of going out with the faithless whimper that extinction alone is to be embraced and that Nothing is at any rate better than Anything. We are told that the causes of war are economic. Of these modern world wars, at any rate, it is clearly false. If people were only anxious to be rich, it is clear that there would be no war. For both sides would be much richer without war. There may be economic excuses for war, but the real cause of war is the love of death.

I write these lines in a world of gathering clouds. The dangers of world-wide catastrophe of incalculable dimensions, the certainty that what would emerge out of such a catastrophe would be something far worse alike for all mankind combine to counsel peace. Nothing is more self-evident than that modern war can only supplant evil at the expense of putting a greater evil in its place. And reason is sufficiently strong within us to convince one element of our nature of all this. Yet there is within us—I speak for myself as much as for others—another element which would be disappointed if all were too easily arranged, which without perhaps quite wishing for universal destruction, at least welcomes steps towards universal destruction. There are, I well know, solid reasons why we must stand firm. I am not denying that, nor am I here concerned with a political argument. But there is also—let us beware of it—a secret place in our soul which wants destruction for its own sake. We are in the world of the Twilight of the Gods.

What is the cause of this perversion, and what is the road of escape from it?

The cause is, I think, clear enough. It is idle to fob ourselves off with the trivial superficiality that this is but the aftermath of two world wars. Why did we have the wars? The wars may indeed have aggravated the disease, but they were themselves a consequence of the disease rather than a cause of it. The cause is that a large number of coincidental forces have combined in the modern

world to rob man of his full nature—to disintegrate, to de-humanise him. Man is not merely an individual. He is a link in a chain—at the first a son, at the last a father. The fundamental institution is the family, and other institutions can only capture his full loyalty so far as they are presented to him as extensions of the family. It is not for nothing that the Christian religion, as indeed other religions, presents itself to its followers in the language of the family—God the Father, Mother Church, the Mother of God, the familiar titles of priests and nuns. It has been a wise instinct, on a lower plane, by which the most successful of secular rulers have always been careful to appear before their subjects as ‘the fathers of their people’, for it is only in so far as it can be seen as an extension of family loyalty that loyalty can be captured for the larger units. The family language can be but a metaphor when it is used in appeal for a country or for the human race. Of a Creating God it is, of course, exact.

Until a few generations ago life for the vast majority of mankind, whatever its evils and its hardships, was an integrated life. He belonged to a family which was still accepted as an indissoluble unit. He lived in a village and knew personally all those by whom his life was largely affected. He knew personally those for whom he worked and those with whom he worked. He accepted religion and the religious practices which gave to him such reminder as he needed of the existence of the larger world and the larger loyalties beyond the small world in which he effectively lived. There was, of course, even in those ages a minority which was uprooted, which drifted off physically from its home, its family or, spiritually, from its religious traditions, which lost itself in the towns, and of that minority some sunk below and some rose above the general herd of society. Some sunk to depths of degradation and others made the original contributions of art or thought which enriched society and to which society owed its progress. But the brilliant and the degraded alike were generally sterile and the towns depended for their continuance on a constant recruitment from the country.

Society has always had and has always needed a certain rootless minority. The problem of the modern age is the problem of scale. The rootless who used to be a small minority are now threatening to become a majority. Coincidentally, we have had—the weakening of the family unit through the growth of divorce—a vast

change in the proportions of population between town and country—the growth of the large unit of production in industry and of ‘the conveyor belt’ and the depersonalization of labour—the follies of *laissez-faire*, which refused to recognize even the existence of the problem of integrating the full personality of the worker into his work in the factory, the counter-folly of Socialism, which, with a Nelsonic gesture, turned its blind eye to the very evils of the system which it was professing to criticize—the integrated life threatened first by an individualism under which the State did too little and then by a Socialism under which the State does too much—the security of life shattered by vast unintelligible forces, military or economic, of which the ordinary man can have neither understanding nor control—above all, the weakening of religion. The disintegration of man has reached its final, horrible absurdity in the displaced person and the deserter. In our police states of identity cards and ration cards and labour exchanges, the man who has once put a foot wrong with authority finds it quite impossible ever to right himself, ever to ‘belong’ again, and is driven on and on down and down almost inevitably from crime to crime. Of these developments some, at any rate, were inevitable. But they demanded a profound modification of human nature to fit itself to meet them. Religion with this power of grace was the only force that was strong enough to carry through this modification, and, had religion remained strong, it might have been carried through without catastrophe. A revival of religion may yet save Western man. Without it we can only look forward to producing out of test tubes a race that would prefer to die.

JAMES THURBER

THE BEAST IN THE DINGLE

With quite the deepest of bows to the master, Henry James

He had brought himself so fully in the end, poor Grantham, to accept his old friend's invitation to accompany her to an 'afternoon' at 'Cornerbright' that now, on the very porch of the so evident house, he could have, for his companion, in all surrender, a high, fine—there was no other word for it—twinkle. Amy Lighter perfectly took in, however, as, for his constant wonder, she always perfectly took in, the unmade, the wider gesture, the unspoken, the wonderful 'oh'. 'You could, you know,' she magnificently faced him with it, 'run'. He promptly matched, he even, for his, as he had once, falling into her frequent idiom, beautifully brought himself to say, money, exceeded her directness, pressing, for all answer, the bell. In the darkly shining, the unfamiliar hallway, our poor brave gentleman, a moment later, found himself, for all his giving up to it, for all his, in point of fact, 'sailing' into it, reaching out, as for an arm relinquished. 'Let me,' it was as though she softly unwrapped it for him, 'save you.' It needed nothing more to bring him out of it, to bring him, indeed, whole, so to say, hog, *into* it. 'Lose me!' he fairly threw it at her. 'Lose me!' And managing the bravest of waves, he magnificently set his face to his prefigured predicament.

He had in the fullest degree, now, the sense of being cut adrift, and it was with all jubilant sail set, that he made for, saluted, and swept past his clearly astonished hostess. He was bound for, as by, it came to him, a scanned and ordered chart, a paper signed and sealed, the woman in, it had been his little wager, brown, the woman who, he had figured it for Miss Lighter, out of the depths of a mysterious desolation, was somewhere all set to pounce upon him. 'Oh, not,' his companion had charmingly wailed, 'in this, of all seasons, brown.' He had not even turned it over. 'The colour,' he had promptly assured her, 'the certain, the unavoidable colour of dilemma.' His companion had, on this, fully taken in his apprehension; she had walked, as it were, around and around it.

'She may, of course.' Amy Lighter had finally brought out for him, 'be charming. I can see her, quite clearly, in the quietest of blues. She might even, you know, beautifully listen.'

'Oh, listen!' he gave it back to her. 'She will tell me about her children, a boy and a girl. She will have, I quite see it, the little girl, braces on her teeth.'

'Beat her, then,' Amy Lighter had smiled, 'to it. Talk, if you will, her head off. Give her,' she had added, after a moment, 'the works.' Our poor sensitive gentleman could only draw, at this, quite collapsing in his chair, the longest of sighs.

If Charles Grantham's course, before the quickening wind of apprehension remembered and renewed, took him, as now, in fact, it did, straight to the high French windows giving on to the garden, if in the watchful eyes of his 'lost' companion, his swift unerring progress took on the familiar shape of flight, it was all, he was afterward to protest, without the vaguest shred of plan. He found himself, none the less, within full view of the way out, and it was but natural that our poor friend should, before casting anchor and reefing sail, ask himself whatever in all the world checked his fair run into the green harbour and the wide free beckoning sea beyond. The answer was made for him in the sudden cry, the veritable 'ahoy', of the lady who, tacking dangerously to port, was at this very moment bearing down upon our drifting gentleman, her signals all a flutter, her eyes shining with the bright, the triumphant, the unmistakable claim of 'salvage'. In the brief space, before she, in all truth, 'boarded' him, and carried off her spoils to the, he somehow found eyes to see, precise corner of his preordained doom, he perceived that she wore—that she positively waved, as from the highest point of her top gallant mast—a dress which his friend, from wherever she might be viewing his unutterable extremity, must confess, in all her exquisite honesty, to be the very brownness of brownness.

He had made through it all, Miss Lighter from her corner in little glances over her shoulder amazedly observed, no smallest gesture on behalf of his embarrassment, waving away the proffered cup and glass, neglecting to light, as, in such a crisis, it was his invariable habit so to do, the protecting tip of a cigarette. He had, on the contrary—there could be no doubt of it—wonderfully listened; he had been, precisely, all ears, so that now, the party being at last over, she fixed him, as they walked together, with

the sharpest of scrutinies. 'She took you all,' said Amy Lighter, 'in. She perfectly held you.' He fixed her, in his turn. 'It was not,' Grantham said, 'a history of childish ills. It was not, moreover, the problem of transportation to and from school.' His companion jumped quite over it. 'She had then, she *has*,' she cried, 'a predicament.' 'Oh,' he came all out with it, 'the prettiest!'

He found, a few steps farther along, the proper preface. 'I was not seized upon,' her friend finally brought out, 'as the detached, the dispassionate outsider. I was brought in—the lady's husband, let me say, is long since dead—I was fairly retained as the authority, the specialist.' Miss Lighter made for him again one of her sudden jumps. 'Your years, it could only be that,' she said, 'your years in Europe.' He turned his full gaze upon her and taking her arm, since now they had arrived before her house, he guided her sharply away from the spot on which, he clearly sensed, she was firmly set to make the indicated, the all too simple final jump. 'There is,' he cut the ground out from under her, 'no man—no man, at any rate, in the sense in which you have made it out—there is not, in fine, another man, spare the mark, for *her*.' She gave it up, on this, releasing, as in pretty surrender, her arm, but he was not to escape so easily; he was not, as he had vainly hoped, to sleep on the matter, to refer it, for shaping and shading, to his own private contemplation, for taking now full possession of our poor sensitive friend, she quite dragged him up the steps of the house and into the parlour.

The figures in the crystal, which Grantham, at last, all eagerly, shined up for her, were five: the woman in brown, as they were secretly and forever sworn, and only so, to think of her; her two small children—he had been wonderfully right about them—a girl and a boy; and two others, for whose clearer definition he turned and turned his crystal to catch the searching sparkle of all possible light. They were the manservant in the house of the woman in brown, and the manservant's wife; they were butler and housekeeper; they were, and for this our narrator gave a special twist to his crystal, natives of some state or other—the woman in brown could not be sure—of Middle Europe. Their names, well, he had forgotten, but our two conspirators for the pleasant continuance of their so frivolous game, hit, all gaily, upon Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. 'Oh, oh,' this accomplished, Miss Lighter began, 'I quite see it all—the figure in the tower, the

figure across the pond.' He caught her, as who should say, in mid-air. 'My poor dear lady,' he reproached her, 'our play is set, I beg you to remember, in New,' he dwelt upon it, 'York. In West-' he added for special emphasis, 'chester.'

The proof of his having, in some subtle sense, given himself away, stood out for her in the elaborate ritual he made of producing, first from one pocket and then from another, cigarette case and match box. She took a short turn, shrewdly watching, and then, suddenly, as the little fire of his match leaped up, she made her wildest, her sublimest jump of all. 'You have tested it,' she cried. 'You have struck it suddenly with one fingernail, and now you turn a little away from it as if to say, "Why, it has a hollow ring"'. You have found, or you think you have found, the tiniest crack in the bell.' He raised against her vehemence the hand that held his cigarette and with it made a little, it seemed to her evasive, symbol in the air. 'You are bringing the curtain down, you know, before the last note of our overture has died away.'

Miss Lighter sat down with a gesture of her own and faced him. 'Well, then,' she sighed, 'trot out Peter Quint. I promise to attend with the utmost gravity. I shall even, if you insist, charmingly shudder.' He made three little helpless wails, one for each stamp of his cigarette in the silver tray. 'Hear me,' he implored his friend, 'out! Write your notice *after* the play. Quit ruffling,' his voice actually rose, 'your programme.'

Upon the house of the woman in brown then (he began) had descended, on a properly wintry day, the manservant and his wife. For the longest while, or so his informant of the afternoon had chosen to believe, nothing beyond the general run of domestic events had happened, nothing, in any case, had, to the common view, taken place. She had been unable, his informant, to make a date, to find a name, for the first disturbing fact. She had become aware, for point of beginning, only of a sense that something, as she had put it (and put it again) was 'up'.

With this striking toss of her thumb, as it were, toward the faint pattern on the unlighted loom, a pattern which, none the less, held for her now attentive listener the high promise of a darkly rewarding intricacy, our lady of the afternoon had had all of a moment a little helpless drop. He had been able, however, in no time at all, our intuitive friend, to dive into the full depths of her silence and come up with what was—as Miss Lighter (he now

slyly reminded her) would say—‘eating’ the lady. The lady was, in simple truth, trying, without success, to fit herself into the design she was striving to weave for him. What he should have guessed all along stood out, with the discovery, straight and bright for Charles Grantham: he was to be called upon to fit the lady into her own design; he was, in short, to work the pattern quite out for her. The lady had found the one, the perfect consultant in quandary, and he could only, holding at last in his very hand the fine clear distillation of his prefigured predicament, settle back in his chair and wave her on. ‘Incident! Incident!’ he had softly cried, and when, at this, his poor bewildered confidant could only give back a halting ‘What?’ he had found for his abject surrender a plainer form: ‘Dramatize! Dramatize!’ he had then implored her.

He made out, all serenely now (for the enchanted Miss Lighter) what had, after an immense amount of ‘backing and filling’, thereupon ensued, shaping the account here and there, she was not slow to see, with the refining touch of his exquisite sensibility. There had indeed been ‘incidents’, the beauty of which, for both our friends, lay in the fact that there was nothing in a literal and vulgar sense that could be *proved*. The very frailest supports had sustained the lady’s suspicion; the fleeting indiscreet lift of childish laughter in the dead of night, a quick silence covering but not concealing the scamper of small feet along an unlighted corridor, a corridor which, the distressed lady had leaned forward to confide, might well be a mere recurring avenue of dream. There had stood out, moreover (perhaps again in fancy), the signs and symbols of a far profounder mischief; coffee grounds (or were they?) in a silver porringer, the faintest lingering perfume—the lady could swear, and yet could not—in *purlieus*, innocent and sacrosanct, which she had identified (God help her, she had wailed) as a cordial rich and green and French. What all might not, the lady upon this revelation had demanded, be going forward in the dark of the night, behind closed doors, by the light of a secret candle? To which her new-found friend in his turn demanded to know what she had to show for ‘effect’. ‘Upon,’ the lady had beautifully kept up with him, ‘the kids? Why, just,’ she had given it to him all at once, ‘just that they are definitely *theirs*.’

He had moved quickly to squeeze from the arrived moment its farthest juices. ‘Measure it, measure it,’ he had cried, and when the

lady could but blankly stare, he had wonderfully brought it out in—how the long diplomatic years had sealed them up—so many words. ‘Are the children pale, gloomy, jumpy?’ he had asked her. ‘Do you see them as neurotic?’ Her laughter had played all about him like the spray of a fountain. ‘Mercy, no!’ when she had found space for words, she made answer. ‘They are utterly, they are absolutely, perfectly charming!’ And it was upon his recital of this wide, this breathtaking, turn of the ‘play’ that Charles Grantham, gathering up hat and gloves, bowed to his hostess, and, with a charming little cry of ‘Intermission, intermission’, made, through her reiterated pleas of ‘Second Act’, for the exit.

II

Amy Lighter made her friend, at an early hour on the following morning, an importunate sign, a sign which, he mournfully protested, was at least as wide as a church door; she knocked, in point of shameless fact, upon his portal. The next moment, it seemed to him, he was keeping pace with her along the pathway of a nearby park. ‘You are holding something back,’ she frankly charged him. ‘You fled from me to keep it to yourself.’ He gave her only the edge of his glance. ‘It is what,’ she, nose to the trail now, ended up triumphantly, ‘you advised her to *do*.’

‘Oh, to *do*,’ he marked it off for a closer look. ‘It was what, on the contrary,’ he went on, after a dozen steps, ‘I advised her *not* to do.’

This time she spied it plainly and she was after it in full cry. ‘You told her not,’ she snatched it up and fairly shook it in front of him, ‘to fire them!’ She caught herself up, for her pride, a throb in advance of her companion’s dolorous ‘ah’, which, none the less, afflicted Amy Lighter with the sharpest sense of his having, as it were, shielded his eyes as for a closer view of one who, taken at casual glance for friend, turns out, on closer examination, to bear only the grossest illusion of resemblance. ‘What then *did* you tell her not to do?’ the lady waived.

‘Not to claim my judgement,’ her friend, all gently, said. ‘I gave her the discreetest look of concern, I made her the politest of murmurs, and withdrew.’

Miss Lighter pouted over it, with the expression of a child whose planned and promised pleasure the sudden coming on of

rain has vastly diminished. 'You walked out on it,' she cried. 'You have left us flat.' It came to him, as he turned over her charming inclusive term, that he must figure, to her eager enterprise, as one who tears up a covenant in the very moment of its being signed, and he could but assure her that if he had, indeed, withdrawn, he had withdrawn for the simple sake of the larger view, to the post of observation. 'Oh, the larger view!' his friend's impatience flared out at him. 'Watch a riot from too great a height and it becomes a charming native dance.' This was a game at which, in long and expert play, he had a hundred times excelled, and leaning toward her smilingly, as from his old Legation chair, he made the sure, the easy, the almost flippant movement of the designated piece. 'If you cannot see the dancing for the dancers,' said Charles Grantham, 'a ball is nothing more than a *bagarre*.'

His companion took fifty paces in silence, during which—he had the touching proof of it in the clenching and unclenching of her fingers—she mightily tugged at the monstrous foundation of such an overwhelming axiomatic generalization as would have—she had but to loosen it from the imprisoning vines of her indignation—fairly squashed him where he stood. What she, at long last, came up with, abandoning the unequal struggle with the too formidable boulder, was a handful of the sharpest pebbles. 'You should call on her. You should talk with the children. You should see for yourself what is going on.' He scooped up and cast back at her a handful of his own. 'Should I draw out the servants? Should I peek into pantries? Should I prowling about below stairs, upending, God save us all, mattresses, in search of Baudelaire and Benedictine?'

There followed for Grantham upon this singular, this unique, this indubitable 'outburst' the shocked recognition of his having, in the very act of rejecting her strategy, fallen plump into the middle of her tactics. He had, moreover, his high preposterous note upon the troubled air condemned him to confess, exposed, as by the wild incautious waving of regimental colours, the precise and secret line of his retreat. She was upon him in a flash. 'Ah,' Miss Lighter groaned, 'it is the *gentleman* who is afraid! Is it that you fear our lady of the afternoon might say, "Come in, Mr. Grantham, shake hands with Peter Quint"?' He could only now, smiling in but the smallest way, come out with it. 'I am afraid of them all,' said Charles Grantham, and, as, for further explanation

he had no word, she strove to figure why, as she put it to herself, she had so cooled off overnight that now, his shoes removed, he was stealing quietly away from their predicament in his stockinged feet.

He had been brought, deviously and unaware, once again before her door, on the realization of which, he performed, bowing over her hand, his little ritual of adieu, but grasping him figuratively by the nape of his neck, she guided him, taking no note of his decorous protests, firmly up the steps and into her parlour. She seemed to his disconsolate eye, as she took a turn the length of the room and back again, to pick up words and put them down, but in the end she could but show him, for all her pains, her two uplifted hands, as who should say, 'Where were we?' 'What,' after a space Grantham put to her, 'do you figure me as bringing to it? Should I come bearing, would you say, Tennyson and tea? And would that make everything "as right as a trivet or an apple pie"?' She met this, as it were, at the door, with her merriest laugh, but he watched her—so it showed for him—set it in a chair for graver study, and he had, in the face of her long look at it, not the smallest of his squirmings. He was to come back to it, this moment; he was, long afterward, to bend above it, stirring its dust, lighting, so to say, matches over it, but it produced upon Grantham, as he sat there, no larger effect than the faint ticking of the other seconds which passed before Amy Lighter spoke. 'I see you,' she said, 'as winning the children away from them. Surely the diplomatic ribbon is more enchanting than,' she rose to it, 'the *sommelier's* chain.'

'Oh, oh,' Charles Grantham closed swiftly in and turned it back on her. 'And precisely who, dear lady, of all our little group, might find it so?'

His hostess held it for the longest while, turning it over and over. 'Are you trying to tell me,' she finally shrewdly cried, 'that the woman in brown has made it all up, just to,' she had a helpless gesture, 'just to set you on her mantelpiece as an adornment?' Before he could make her any answer, she was in and out of a hundred doors, hitherto unguessed at, of his long low rambling apprehension. 'Do you mean,' she pitched it very high, 'that she presented her children as charming and enchanted with this vulgar end in view? Do you mean there are perhaps no servants whatsoever of the kind, no dark passages and perils, no figure

deep and secret?' There came to him, in the train of this, the realization that in some obscure desperation she had given up all her own striking turns of phrase; she had fallen, in short, into his, as if she hoped, by getting quite inside of him, to ascertain, what—thus yesterday she would have put it—made him 'tick'. 'Oh, leave me out of it,' implored Charles Grantham, 'out of, at least, so utter and vast a dropping off. I'm not worth that for any lady's mantelpiece. I was only pulling at a thread to see what might unravel.' She had a faint brave smile. 'You left the lady, in pulling at your thread, stark, raving, as my mother used to say, naked,' Amy Lighter said. He had his own small smile and word for this. 'Oh, well, then clothe her, while I look the other way.' His companion came at it through still another door. 'Do you see the *children*, then, as making it all up? Perhaps the real and only villain is some story they have read.' She had sat down but now she leaped from her chair. 'Perhaps *the* story!' she fairly shouted.

He stared at her in frank discomfiture for by her new and sudden twists of the *donné*, her fresh and frantic glances, first from a point too high, and then a point too low, at their so fully walked about dilemma, she had made him wonder for a moment precisely who *she* was, precisely *where*, in or out of this so special interlude, he could fit her in and make her stick. But as, not knowing what in the world else to do or say, he moved a cautious hand toward hat and gloves, she quickly found to cry 'Oh, no, you don't! I know perfectly well,' she went on, 'what you expect me to say next. You expect me to say that perhaps the servants are, in truth, agents of a special kind, assigned to keep a sharp eye on the children who are in reality midgets, possessed of a police record as long as your arm.' When, on this, he could but wildly gape, she continued, 'Can't you see I'm making fun of you? Can't you see I'm showing you how easy and how utterly idiotic it is to kick the living day-lights out of our poor little predicament?' She marked off a pause in which to bite her lower lip. 'Can't you see,' she plunged ahead, 'that it is a predicament *within* a predicament—the predicament of you and me? What happens to us if I stand by while you proceed to rearrange the figures in our story to represent nothing more challenging, for peril faced and problem shared, than the inauguration of Benjamin Harrison?'

Not for long years had Charles Grantham been so turned upon, thrust at, and struck down; not, in fact—the precise instance came

back to him in a rush—since the irascible plenipotentiary of a certain Balkan country, during a period of tender international relations, completely missing a negative and wrongly translating a salient verb, had risen from his chair to heap upon the speechless American diplomat coals of fire in five separate (one could scarcely have said distinct) languages. What stood out brightly for Grantham, what positively shone for him, was that the light which struck in, from wherever it struck in, played no longer upon the quintet in the crystal, but fairly bathed in fine cold brilliance the figures of Miss Lighter and himself, who, after making narrower and narrower circles about their mutual entanglement, stood suddenly motionless upon a tiny peak of time, uncertain, unhappy, un-, which afflicted our poor gentleman with the sharpest pain of all, comfortable.

‘I was not,’ her friend heard himself remarkably saying, out of his profound embarrassment, ‘I was not even *presented* to the lady in brown.’ To which, Amy Lighter, a chilling quality in her small laugh, at once gave answer, ‘One is not presented to the victim of a street accident, but one does not,’ she made a struck gong of it, ‘just sit there.’ Upon which, her guest, immediately arising, hat and gloves in hand, could but make his most formal bow. ‘I should like,’ Charles Grantham said, ‘I should wonderfully like, to do some faint far justice to,’ he had a moment’s groping for it, ‘our peril, but I have lost—ah, how clearly you have set it off for my reluctant heart—I have quite utterly and forever lost,’ he nobly, if all forlornly, came up to it, ‘the name of action.’

The beauty of her next remark, and the fact of its appearing to him as beautiful, quite shimmered for our miserable gentleman, quite blinded him as with the radiant proof of his having somehow through it all still clutched the hem, so to speak, of her sustained realism; the beauty of it, I say, lay in the plain truth that there was in it, precisely no beauty, in the general sense of the term, whatsoever. ‘Nuts *alors*!’ Amy Lighter quite simply said, and taking his hand a second in advance of his placing it upon the knob of her front door, she all sublimely brought out, ‘I will not let *anything* go!’ He had, as he stepped out upon the porch, an italic of his own. ‘I leave it *all*,’ said Charles Grantham, ‘where it so wonderfully belongs—in, dear lady, your charming and capable hands.’

III

It chanced, if chance it could be called, that Grantham was summoned, although we should perhaps not peer too closely into this, to Washington, in the mazes of which bewildering city he spent, one way and another, the ensuing fortnight, receiving no sign from Miss Lighter, making no sign of his own. If the days of our gentleman of the chancelleries were not too arduous, his nights, none the less, were visited by dreams of the most outlandish and terrifying nature. He was pursued, in recurring nightmares, by two small but dimly defined figures, whose clearest and, at the same time, awfulest characteristic, was the presence, on their right hands, of two extra fingers covered with a sticky substance whose faint sweet aroma identified it, beyond doubt, as some kind of candy or other; but there was, nevertheless, to the sleeper's sense, in spite of this, the strongest and most dreadful suspicion that the stuff had undergone, in some monstrous manner, a dipping into, he found the word for it when he awoke, anisette. Through the perilous passageways of his dark haunted world, our dreamer, pursued and almost overtaken by his two small familiars, had more than once escaped the clutch of their horrid hands only by dint of running up a hundred stairs, and in the last and nearest chase, he had been forced to climb that tall and vulgar pile of steel which affronts the Champs de Mars.

It was with the sharpest sense of relief, then, that Charles Grantham, at the end of his appointed time in our crowded capital, found himself again on a train. On his arrival at his destination he gave but scant time to the refreshment of his spirits and his linen; changing into a clean collar, drinking off a cup of milk, he took his hat and gloves and made straightway for the home of Amy Lighter. Beautiful upon the stairs in something white and filmy (the maid having let him in), she poised for a high fine moment before, all joyfully, she swept down the stairs to claim both his hands for hers. Once again in her familiar, her, to him, only a little less than his recent dreams, haunted parlour, he sat in his accustomed chair and stared up at her.

'Something has happened,' he said, all at once. 'Oh, everything has happened,' said Miss Lighter. 'You have happened.' 'I mean,' he took it straight up, 'to our predicament—to *your* predicament.'

'Oh, to ours, to ours,' cried his friend. He shook his head. 'I gave it all to you,' he said. 'I quite plumped it in your lap.' She gave it, he thought, too easy a wave. 'Is it, then, all settled?' he asked. 'It's all *everything*,' she said. 'It blew up, and it blew over.' 'On its side?' he incredulously wanted to know. 'Away,' she said, with another wave. He was on the very edge of his chair. 'I am all ears,' he almost wailed.

Thereupon Amy Lighter began with 'I saw her at lunch, I saw her at tea, I was *there* to dinner.' Grantham's 'ah' had the effect on them both of a one-note chime dropping into the silence of a deserted house. He had another of his sharp senses, this time the sharp sense that the empty house in which his note sounded and lingered was theirs, and the fear rose in him that during their little pause she, too, all vainly, listened for the coming of footsteps and the opening of the door. She made it, when she went on, as simple and brief as could be, as if she feared, measuring stress and strain, his fine sensitivity would not bear the weight of too oft-repeated squeals ('Then what do you suppose? Now, see if you can guess?') or of too many liftings of the narrative to high vertiginous peaks of insufferable suspense.

She had seen the servants; they were, the lady in white said, slight, fifty, deferential, Hungarian; they neither bowed too low nor smiled too often; she had, Miss Lighter said, liked them. The children, for their part, were, indeed, charming; they were all, she gave it a special shape for his delight, of a twinkling gravity. Grantham placed at the base of this a little garland of 'ahs', but his hostess rushed on. It was, she pointed out, quite beautifully simple. The Quints (our two friends had the perfect smile for this), the Quints had always wanted, had never had, no longer could hope for, children of their own. 'I mean,' began Miss Lighter, but he made with one finger a small up-beat, and she let it trail away. Oh, Miss Lighter rushed along, they had cast a spell on the children, all right, they had caught them in a bright enchantment, the dark prefigured secret of which, our snooping lady had, in several visits to the house, searched for in vain.

Miss Lighter rose now for one of her turns about the room. 'I found,' she suddenly said to her guest, 'positively and precisely *nothing*!' He gave her last word a hollow echo, through which she swiftly proceeded with 'What, exactly, did we expect?' She charmingly brought him into it. 'What strange sign, what

curious symbol, what mark of what beast, what hint of hugger-mugger, what exchange of secret signals?’

‘My poor dear lady,’ was all that Charles Grantham could find for this.

‘An alembic under a bed?’ she went on. ‘Verlaine beneath a tiny pillow? A stain on a lintel? A snatch of incantation? A dilated pupil? A rose turning black? There was, I repeat, precisely nothing.’ She walked up to his chair. ‘I even spent the night,’ said Amy Lighter.

‘You spent the night?’ he cried.

‘I spent the night,’ she said again, and opening her hands, ‘Nothing,’ she slowly murmured. ‘A dripping faucet, a banging shutter, a board contracting and creaking in a cooling corridor.’ He gave, to this alliteration, a single bringing together of the palms of his hands. ‘Oh,’ she said, mistaking him, ‘our curtain has not come down. There remained for me an awesome task, the task, in short, of conveying to the woman in brown, once and for all, that there had been no obscene rites involving eye of newt and toe of frog, or scrapings from old consecrated bells, or counter-clockwise circlings of a moonlit church; I had to let her know, you see, that it had all been managed, the winning of her children’s hearts, in broadest daylight, by the exercise of the most natural arts.’

‘Such as?’ her friend gently breathed.

‘Such as a bright eye, an attentive ear, a skilful hand,’ Miss Lighter came back at once. ‘The Quints, for I saw them at it, could, in their proper turn and time, be both audience and players.’ ‘And where, all the while,’ Grantham had to ask, ‘was our woman in brown?’ ‘Oh, in a book,’ Miss Lighter cleared it up for him, ‘in a state, at a party yelling for help.’

Her guest paid to this, the while his frown persisted, the solicited laugh. ‘But why in goodness’ name,’ Grantham at length demanded, ‘didn’t she, as you would have had me put it to her one day, “fire” them?’ That was easy enough for his companion. ‘Doubts are doubts,’ she said, ‘hopes are hopes, and above all, in this so special period, servants are servants.’

Charles Grantham had a long admiring gaze at Amy Lighter before he settled further in his chair to say, ‘However did you, in the end, tell her?’ She had her jolliest laugh of the afternoon before she—the music still in her tone—replied, ‘By virtue, can you

ever forgive me, of three martinis—this at our final luncheon together in her home—which had quite the opposite effect of sounding a clear bell for the poor dear lady. I should have attempted the business on my first. Instead of bringing the simple light of the matter in measured colours through my polished prism, I struck a confused and even blacker dread into her tortured heart.’ Grantham sat forward in his chair again. ‘I heard myself,’ pursued Miss Lighter, ‘attempting to describe in terms of two different sets of verse, a million glittering miles apart (at least they glittered for me then), how her children had walked in brightness, not in gloom, how they had come, in short, all clean and good and normal, out of our ghoul-haunted woodland—perhaps I should have stuck to Poe, or to the simple statement.’

‘But what you exactly said?’ Grantham prompted her.

‘What I exactly said,’ cried Amy Lighter, ‘was “You can, my very very dear friend, rest forever assured that whereas your darlings are blissfully aware that little lambs eat ivy, they do not entertain the slightest suspicion that it rains in their hearts as it rains on the town.” And I added, my hand on hers, “Oh, never reproach their innocent hearts with *Qu’a tu fait de ta jeunesse?*”’

Grantham got up from his chair to take ten slow paces around his companion’s remarkable revelation before he turned to her with, ‘And the effect upon your bewildered hostess of your altogether enchanting obliquity was precisely what?’

‘Precisely the wildest imaginable,’ said Miss Lighter. ‘She gaped at me as if I had whispered to her ear the horrid proof that all her fears were true twice over. She rose and staggered to the cord to call the servants in. The scene that then ensued was indescribable, made up of pleas, and shouts, and tears, and gettings down on knees, and pointings toward the door. Not one of us could have grasped more than a third of it. I shouted out, I think in French, above the English and Hungarian; it will wake me shrieking, from my sleep, until the day I die.’

Grantham had enormous difficulty in finding the tip of a cigarette with his lighted match, and his perturbation was not assuaged when, all of a sudden, Miss Lighter loudly laughed. ‘I can see you, you poor dear,’ she exclaimed, ‘standing there in the dreadful midst of it, holding your tray of *Idylls of the King* and orange pekoe!’ It gave him such a drop as brought his companion

to her feet for a gentle pat of his arm. 'We could hear them, as we panted in our corners,' Miss Lighter went back to it, 'packing and sobbing, sobbing and packing; but they have gone, I may at once cheer you with it, to a distinguished, a tranquil, a less fearful household.' He tucked this, with a sigh of relief and a gesture of finality, into its safe and ordered pigeonhole.

'The children,' his narrator continued, 'were at school. We awaited their coming in the highest apprehension, I tapping my fingers, my hostess cracking, it quite drove me mad, her knuckles.'

'And when at long, I'm sure it must have seemed to you, last, they returned and were told?' quavered Grantham. 'Why,' she said, 'they turned upon their mother, they screamed that they hated her and would always hate her, they said that she had sent away the people they, in the whole world, most loved. Thereupon they ran screaming from the house, and our poor stricken lady, still cracking her knuckles, dissolved in tears upon my bosom.' Our diplomat covered his eyes with his hands, as if a glare too strong for him had searched him out.

'We sat there for hours,' Amy Lighter took up her narrative again, 'while she went over it and over it and over it and over it. There seemed to be, for the appeasement of her anguish, only the tiniest grain of consolation. This resided in the consideration that she would save, by their going—the servants, of course—three hundred dollars a month. It was upon one of her numberless reiterations of this vulgar fact, this saving shred of silver lining, that from the hallway in which they had been silently hiding, our two little eavesdroppers, who had crept all stealthily into the house by the back door, came into the room. Their eyes were dry and wide, their mouths quite open. "Gee!" they cried, and "Gee!" again. "Do you mean you paid them three *hundred dollars a month*?" And when their mother said she had indeed, they brought out a long sequence of "gees" and "goshes" and "by gollies". You perceive, of course, they were figuring in terms of toys and candy and movies and pony rides, their share of the released booty.'

Miss Lighter extracted from her friend's proffered silver case a cigarette with which, after leaning toward his flame, she drew a little line in the air. 'I left them, all three of them,' she finished up, 'joyously blubbering and babbling and hugging and kissing. So endeth,' she stabbed out her cigarette in a tray, 'our dark tale, not

with a whimper, but, I hope, my dear friend, a proper and satisfactory bang.

'Oh, the bang was all yours,' said Charles Grantham nobly. 'I quite stuck my fingers in my ears.' He got up, crossed to the mantelpiece, picked up, studied, and set down, a bit of Staffordshire, and turned at last to her. "'Madam Life's a piece in bloom'," quoted Charles Grantham, "'Death goes doggin everywhere; She's the tenant of the room. He's the ruffian on the stair.'" I think your paraphrase of another poet came so easily to your lips to close out our tale, because you see in me the very type and sign of old J. Alfred Prufrock. Oh, I have paid my court from far across the room behind a chair, but I fully believe that if and when the ruffian breaks into the place, I will be able to wag my finger in his face and say (we come to still a greater poet), "Shake then thy gory locks at me, and watch me if I tremble".'

His hostess ran her sensitive fingers over what he had given her, but making nothing whatever out of it, she cried, 'But there has been no such awful threat to any one of us!'

'Oh, oh, and that's just it,' said Grantham. 'If the dreadful object is presented so that I can plainly see it, why, who's afraid?' She sensed that one more step would bring him to his peroration, and, in silence, she let him take it. 'If I should strike,' he made his step, 'at every rustling in the undergrowth, a high heroic stance, sword drawn from cane, and cry, "Come out, come out!" and if there should advance in answer to my challenge, on veritable tippy-toe, the most comical of beasts, about its neck a pink and satiny ribbon tied in the fluffiest of bows, what, dear lady, in the name of Heaven, would become of me?'

Well, there it was, then, his beast in the dingle, out in the open at last, scampering about, and when she could find breath, Miss Lighter, merrily laughing, put a name to it. 'A kitty cat,' she cried, 'a kitty cat for a tiger!'

'Oh,' said Grantham, 'for the matter of that, a bunny rabbit.'

'But isn't that precisely what *I*, cocktail in hand, challenged from the bushes?' his friend gaily demanded.

'Oh, but you *challenged* it,' he threw back at her, 'while I watched, from a safe and sorry distance.' He brought out, before she could prevent it, an epitaph. 'Here lies one who tippy-toed away from it, away from you, away from *us*.'

She cut, with a tired impatient gesture, straight through to the

point around which, she had the strongest sensation, he was set to make one of his wide interminable circlings. 'What are you trying to make out of it all?'

Oh, he had the answer for that; it was as if he had kept it, for the longest while, shined up and ready, in his most accessible pocket. 'Nothing,' Charles Grantham exquisitely wailed, 'nothing,' and in the deep silence that followed, a clock, somewhere, far away, sprinkled the disconsolate, the incomprehensible hour upon their bowed heads. There was for our lady—oh, for our gentleman, too—the feeling of a fine literature of living breaking into flame, flaring high, falling suddenly to ashes.

'I would marry you at the drop of a hat,' she threw beautifully out for him.

He tenderly sank, almost up to his drooping shoulders, into the subjunctive. 'Would *have*,' he murmured, 'had *I* but had—' he let it die away and arose, almost briskly, and took and held her hand. 'They are sending me away,' said Charles Grantham. She got up and took his other hand, applying the most affectionate pressure, meeting his eye with the deepest possible gaze, but they both felt it, I think, as a letting go and not a holding on. 'Wherever in the world are you going?' she plaintively moaned.

'Ask me that again,' he said, sadly smiling, 'at the door,' and when, after turning the knob a moment later, he bent over her hand as they heard the faint, the unmistakable sound of the curtain rustling down, she asked him her question again.

'Why, here I go,' cried Charles Grantham, with a little toss of his hand and his best, his most wonderful twinkle, 'round the prickly pear,' and he was off, shoulders squared, head erect, down the steps and up the street without a backward glance, leaving behind him, in the doorway, still staring, a bewildered lady, in whose consciousness there was, forever after, to echo and echo again, a little broken fragment of question.

ROBERT LIDDELL

STUDIES IN GENIUS

VII—CAVAFY

MR. E. M. FORSTER, his friend, has drawn a charming sketch of the poet Cavafy: the little old man in a straw hat, standing on an Alexandrian pavement, and at a most unusual angle to it, talking in eloquent, rounded, bookish phrases, then disappearing to his flat or, reluctantly, to his place of business. An urban old man, who never looked at the sea, except perhaps once, when he wrote:

Let me stand here, and let me too look at nature. . . .
No other glimpse of the Mediterranean is recorded.

Many people in Alexandria have known him, more have known friends of his. They have drawn caricatures of him for his posthumous admirers on the backs of envelopes, they have tried to imitate for us that unique and extraordinary voice; they have told us stories about him, and a little scandal.

His friends recall long evenings of talk in his lamp-lit or candle-lit house, with its untidy bookshelves and old-fashioned Oriental furniture in the old Greek quarter of the city—it overlooks the former Greek hospital and the seventeenth-century church of the Greek patriarchate. They recall fondly his strange foibles, phobias and hypocrisies; it is a pity that they have not put more of his conversation on record.

A characteristic little piece of ironical flattery addressed by Cavafy to a snobbish young man has been preserved:

'My dear B., you've saved my life; I'm deeply grateful to you for coming today. For days I've been tortured by a doubt. Only you can resolve it. . . . Tomorrow evening I'm invited to dinner at Antony Benaki's. And without you, dear B., I should have made myself ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. I've forgotten how to go into the world! I've forgotten how people eat! Once, I remember, when people ate soup, they used to put the spoon into their mouths by the point. Then you were only supposed to eat out of the side of the spoon. My dear B., what's the correct thing today? Only you know, only you can tell me. These things

are important, but very important. Often our happiness hangs on them.'

Cavafy was as reticent and decorous in conversation as he was outspoken in his poetry—some things, he said, needed art to make them beautiful. But it is related that if a beautiful face showed itself in his house, he paid it the silent tribute of lighting another candle.

The passion of his life was his poetry, and he took an entirely individual attitude to its circulation. He had poems privately printed from time to time on loose sheets, which he himself distributed. If a new inquirer asked for his poems, Cavafy spent hours collecting loose sheets together, and writing in the improvements that he fancied at the moment. Then he had to be assured that the recipient was worthy. Sometimes he had regrets for having given them away to people whom he came to think unworthy to own them. In such cases he would think up elaborate excuses for getting them back into his own hands again, alleging that they were in need of correction or completion.

And yet this work, printed in a piecemeal fashion, and circulated in an eccentric way, has a unity—a unity which it is important to examine, for Cavafy is one of the 'Four Great Dead Poets' of Modern Greece. A critic of Cavafy must try to find what Henry James called 'the Figure in the Carpet'.

Monsieur Baud-Bovy, in his recent book on Greek poetry, professes to have found the figure in Cavafy's carpet. He tells us—what is only too well known—that Cavafy was sexually abnormal, and he makes everything hang upon that fact. Even so, an ignorant person might remark: 'There is a lot of red in that carpet', leaving us no wiser whether it was a Shîrâz, Tabriz or Saraband. Monsieur Baud-Bovy¹ praises Cavafy's earlier poems, in which he thinks a need for reticence made him express his abnormality, and his consequent *malaise*, in terms of an appealing imagery: he regrets that the inter-war years, with their relaxation of tabus, should have encouraged the poet to admit into his latter poems a *louche* and boring company of workmen or shop-assistants in pink or mauve shirts. This is a most inadequate account of Cavafy's literary development.

Sexual abnormality coloured Cavafy's carpet, there is not a doubt of it—but it did not form the pattern, which is more

¹ Samuel Baud-Bovy: *Poésie de la Grèce Moderne* (Lausanne, 1946).

complicated and interesting than Monsieur Baud-Bovy would have us believe. Another phrase of Henry James's will help to define it: 'The Sense of the Past', and some words of George Seferis: 'Cavafy little by little obtained a historical sense of himself, and of the world in which he lived.'

Cavafy was an Alexandrian. He said that he was neither Hellene nor Hellenist, but Hellenic. On his father's side he was connected with an Alexandrine business-house, on his mother's with an old Phanariot family. Some of his youth was spent in the Greek colonies of Constantinople and of Liverpool, but far the greater part of his life was spent in Alexandria, where he was born and died. He belonged to the international Greek world, and was never more than a visitor in the modern kingdom of Greece—on whose soil its greatest poet, Solomos, never even set foot. Dickens has written of a Grand-Duke of Modena, who was unique among heads of States in refusing to recognize Louis-Philippe as King of the French: Cavafy was unique in refusing to recognize the Arab conquest of Egypt.

Historically, there is nothing to be said for such an attitude; the modern Greek colonists of Alexandria were encouraged to come there by Mohammed Ali, and owed nothing to the city's ancient past. They have no claims to be genealogically descended from the Ptolemaic world. Culturally there is everything to be said for Cavafy's attitude: the Greeks of Alexandria have something more important than genealogy or continuity of occupation to connect them with the past; they have identity of place, and close similarity of language. Yet in that city, where snobbery is by no means unknown, his is the only voice that has been raised to claim the most distinguished spiritual relationship to which any Alexandrian can pretend.

He is the heir of Ancient Alexandria—a different place from ancient Athens, indeed. In its art we miss:

The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation.

Its literature is clever, sophisticated, witty, learned, civilized—even over-civilized. It was not meant to stir the heart, but to delight the mind, and sometimes to titillate the sense. It is the literature of an old civilization, unlike the early morning freshness of the early lyric poets and Homer, or the strong prime of the great Greek tragedians: a lesser thing, but yet a good thing.

Cavafy is the heir of Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, and of the Alexandrine poets of the Greek Anthology—though born out of time, he belongs with them; and he holds a high place among them.

Yet Cavafy does not merely write as if he had been born in A.D. 400, instead of 1863. He has come into an older world, and later into the history of Hellenism. He does not only draw on Alexandria for inspiration, but on all the Greek world—ancient, medieval and modern. But he looks at it from an amused sceptical Alexandrine point-of-view. Moreover, he has read the Symbolists, and has assimilated such modern themes as *Tædium Vitæ*. This has inspired several of his early poems, notably *The City*.

It is surely a mistake to explain this poem, with Monsieur Baud-Bovy, as Cavafy's desire to escape from the consequences of his anomaly. It is not only the abnormal who at times find the modern, industrial city frightful. And in Alexandria—built on a narrow limestone ridge, cut off from Egypt by salt lakes, from Europe by the sea—there is every temptation to occasional claustrophobia.

A better commentary is provided by Mr. T. S. Eliot. After defining 'the poet' as 'one who not merely restores a tradition which has been in abeyance, but one who in his poetry retwines as many straying strands of tradition as possible', he continues: 'In the case of Baudelaire, this ability to go beneath appearances to the most recurrently pervading elements in life was the result of the peculiar dogged strength with which he felt the torturing impact of the great modern city upon the lonely individual.'

You said: 'I'll find some other land, I'll find some other sea,
Somewhere there must be, surely, a better town.

My every attempt here is like a charge written down
Against me, and my heart—like a corpse—buried away.

In this swamp is my mind always to stay?

Wherever I look, wherever I turn my gaze,

I see black ruins of my life, and of the days

That here I passed, wasted, and lost utterly.

'You'll not find another place, you'll not find another sea.

This city is going to follow you. You'll stray

In the same streets. In the same suburbs you'll grow grey;

Amid these same houses you'll reach old age.

You'll always find this city. Another?—it's a mirage.
There is no ship for you, there is no road.
And just as in this hole you have destroyed
Your life, through all the world you have lost it utterly.

From the Symbolists Cavafy also learned how to tell a story, and Browning may have been another influence here—though, happily, Cavafy never wants to point a moral. This story-telling, and this kinship with the Symbolists, will often remind an English reader of the early Eliot. Cavafy is an Eliot character; he has a touch of Prufrock, something of the waiter in *Dans le Restaurant*, possibly something of Burbank with his Baedeker—and a great deal of Gerontion, the unheroic, little old man, who was certainly not at Thermopylæ. With ironic nostalgia he recreates his own past, and the varied past of his race. The Greek world is old, and Cavafy is a middle-aged, even an elderly poet; he wrote hardly anything of value before he was forty, and he died at seventy, still leaving unsaid things he wished to say.

He comments on Greek themes from an elderly, disillusioned point of view. For him the Gods of Olympus are at best stupid and ineffective, at worst malicious. But on the whole the ancient world was too bright and young and heroic for this cynical, middle-aged poet. Moreover, he was Hellenic, not a Hellene; and as an Alexandrian he felt more kinship with the other outposts of the Greek world, than with Athens herself.

The cousins, as it were, of the kingdom of the Ptolemys, are the other kingdoms founded by Alexander and his generals—the half-barbarian kingdoms of Macedon and Syria. Cavafy is also fascinated by even further outlying parts of Greek civilization—for example, by the Greek-speaking rulers of Palestine in the century before Christ. Anyone in the Near or Middle East who prides himself on the Greek name wins his sympathy—the more so, perhaps, if it is someone who has no great title to it.

From the sub-Greek world he chooses the kind of theme fitted to his poetry. There must be a picture, a story, or a character, clear enough to be conveyed in his terse, epigrammatic lines—he will convey it with acidity, but not wholly without pity. It is likely to be a story of defeat. Such a poem is *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Byzantium, or whatever Greek beleaguered city is here intended, is revealed as only waiting to give herself up:

What are we waiting for, gathered in the market-place?
It's the Barbarians who are to come today.

And why such inactivity inside the senate-house?

Why do the senators sit still, not making any laws?

Because the Barbarians are coming today.

What laws more are the senators to make?

When the Barbarians come, they'll make laws.

Why did our emperor get up so early in the morning,

Why is he sitting, waiting, at the great gate of the city,

High in state upon his throne, the crown upon his head?

Because the Barbarians are coming today.

And the emperor is waiting to receive

Their leader. Moreover he has prepared

A parchment to hand him. On it

He has given him by writ many names and titles.

And why have our two consuls, and the praetors also with
them,

Gone out today in scarlet robes, covered with fine brocade,

Why have they put their bracelets on, with all those
amethysts,

And rings upon their fingers, bright with shining emeralds;

Why are they carrying today their precious staves of office,

So exquisitely chiselled, and inlaid with gold and silver?

Because the Barbarians are coming today,

And that sort of thing impresses Barbarians.

Why don't our worthy rhetoricians come today as usual

To spout their speeches at us, and say what they have to say?

Because the Barbarians are coming today;

And they're bored by eloquence and public speeches.

Why does there suddenly begin so great a restlessness,

And such confusion—(and the faces, look how grave they grow!)

And why are all the streets and squares so quickly emptying,

And why does everyone go home so very full of thought?

Because night has fallen, and the Barbarians haven't come.

And some people have arrived from the frontiers

With news that there aren't any Barbarians any more.

And now, what is to become of us without Barbarians?

Those people were a kind of solution.

Cavafy's pessimism or defeatism is not to be called a philosophy: he was not a philosopher, he was an historian. If he had any philosophy, it was the most elementary philosophy of history: he knew that people do not learn by their mistakes, or by those of others, and that the eminent frequently come to a bad end. He did not whimper over his share of the human burden, like Housman—he was too brave, and too well-bred. He did not chuckle over the misfortunes of other people, like Hardy—he did not really very much care about what happened to other people. Of the places of the past that inspired his poems, Troy and Thermopylae are destined to fall—so is Alexandria, although for a time Cleopatra spreads about the lying rumour that Antony is being victorious in Greece. As for Ithaca, goal of the wandering Ulysses—all it has to offer him is the wonderful journey thither:

ITHACA¹

When you start on the way to Ithaca,
Wish that the way be long,
Full of adventure, full of knowledge.
The Laestrygones and the Cyclopes
And angry Poseidon, do not fear;
Such, on your way, you shall never meet
If your thoughts are lofty, if a noble
Emotion touch your kind, your body.
The Laestrygones and the Cyclopes
And angry Poseidon you shall not meet
If you carry them not in your soul,
If your soul sets them not up before you.

Wish that the way be long,
That on many summer mornings,
With great pleasure, great delight,
You enter harbours for the first time seen;
That you stop at Phoenician marts.
And procure the goodly merchandise,
Mother-of-pearl and corals, amber and ebony,
And sensual perfumes of all kinds,
Plenty of sensual perfumes especially;

¹*Translated by* GEORGE VALASSOPOULOS

HORIZON

To wend your way to many Egyptian cities,
To learn and yet to learn from the wise.

Ever keep Ithaca in your mind,
Your return thither is your goal.
But do not hasten at all your voyage,
Better that it last for many years;
And full of years at length you anchor at your isle
Rich with all that you have gained on the way;
Do not expect Ithaca to give you riches.

Ithaca gave you your fair voyage.
Without her you would not have ventured on the way.
But she has no more to give you.

And if you find Ithaca a poor place,

She has not mocked you.
You have become so wise, so full of experience
That you have understood already what
These Ithacas mean.

In Cavafy's panorama of the past we are not to expect to see heroes—though he wrote two poems inspired by one of the noblest episodes in Plutarch, where Cratesiclea, the aged mother of Cleomenes, King of Sparta, boldly went to Egypt as a hostage, to purchase the alliance of Ptolemy, rejoicing that in old age she could still be useful to her country, and telling her son that it did not befit them, as Spartans, to shed tears in public at their parting.

Cratesiclea has her place in Cavafy's pattern, but she is exceptional there. We are rather to expect to find such characters as that Greek collaborator with the Persians, who has sold himself for a satrapy; like the idle young man who has tired of philosophy and religion, and now thinks of taking up politics; like the Byzantine noble, who has chosen the losing side in a civil war, and wishes he had gone over to the winning side of John Cantacuzene while there was yet time; like the Syrian, who has studied in Alexandria, and is willing to sell his Greek-crammed brain to any of the contending parties whose rivalry threatens his country. We expect to see towns like that town in Asia Minor, which has prepared an inscription congratulating the glorious Antony on his victory over the infamous Octavian—and is quite ready to change the names round when Octavian is victorious over Antony

at Actium. We see the people of Alexandria doing what they are well aware is an empty homage to the sons of Cleopatra.

There are two pictures of the betrayed—both young, beautiful and helpless. There is Caesarion, son of Cleopatra, betrayed by a venal schoolmaster, and deceived into thinking that Octavian means to make him King of Egypt—he is alone, lost and perplexed in that Alexandria which lately shouted in Greek, Coptic and Hebrew proclaiming him King of Kings—when he stood with his brothers in the gymnasium, wearing a rose-silk robe and a crown. Now he is going to be murdered. And there is Aristobulos, young high-priest of Jerusalem, betrayed by Herod his brother-in-law, and treacherously held under in a swimming pool, and drowned by other boys.

In Cavafy's picture of the ancient world people change easily to the religion or the politics of the victor. The ousting of the old Gods from Antioch after the death of Julian the Apostate, their last champion, is described in a sly, ironical poem:

A procession of priests and laymen—
Every walk of life is represented—
Goes through the streets, the squares and the gates
Of the famous city of Antioch.
At the head of this imposing procession
A lovely white-clad youth is holding
In raised hands the Cross,
Our strength and hope, the Holy Cross.
The pagans, who were formerly so proud,
Now, frightened and withdrawn,
In haste retreat from the procession.
Far from us, far from us may they ever be.

(Till they forsake their errors.) Goes forth
The Holy Cross. Into every quarter
Where Christians are living in the fear of God
It brings consolation and joy:
The faithful come out, to the doors of their houses,
And full of jubilation they adore it—
The strength, the salvation of the world, the Cross—

It is a yearly Christian festival,
But today it is being celebrated, you see, more solemnly.

At last the empire has been delivered.
The most evil, the abhorred
Julian reigns no more.

Let us pray for the most pious Jovian.

Two judgements of Mr. Eliot's about two other twentieth-century writers probably express better than any other words one could find the nature and unity of Cavafy's work. Of James Joyce's use of myth, he has written: 'It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.' And in introducing the poems of Ezra Pound he wrote: 'When he deals with antiquities, he extracts the essentially living; when he deals with contemporaries, he notes only the accidental. But this does not mean that he is antiquarian or parasitical on literature. Any scholar can see Arnaut Daniel or Guido Cavalcanti as literary figures; only Pound can see them as living beings. Time, in such connexions, does not matter; it is irrelevant whether what you see, really see, as a human being, is Arnaut Daniel or your greengrocer. It is merely a question of the means suited to the particular poet, and we are more concerned with the end than the means.' If historical rather than literary figures are substituted for Arnaut Daniel and Guido Cavalcanti, and the right names are chosen, this passage will read as true for Cavafy. What is essentially living in Antony, in Cratesiclea, and in Caesarion has been extracted—and sometimes only what is accidental has been noted in the workmen and shop-assistants in their pink and mauve shirts.

Perhaps of all Eliot characters, Cavafy is most like Tiresias, the seer of *The Waste Land*, in whom all the men and women of the poem meet: the one-eyed merchant, the Phoenician sailor, Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, Belladonna, and all the women. In this little, old, sexually abnormal Alexandrian poet, looking without fear, and without very much compassion, on the futility and anarchy which is contemporary history, Hecuba, Cratesiclea, Anna Comnena, Pompey, Antony and John Cantacuzene melt into each other, and are not wholly distinct from the equivocal characters that haunt the dark, hot streets of Alexandria in our own century. His historical and his modern poems form part of the same synthesis.

And the sense of the past permeates his modern erotic poetry.

He writes as an elderly man, with poignant nostalgia for youth, like that which he attributes to an imagined poet from Com-magene:

The ageing of my body and my beauty
Is like a stab from a dreadful knife.

His poems are set in his own past (real or imagined) which is itself a period of Greek history like any other. Some of them (not necessarily autobiographical) bear such titles as: 'In his twenty-fifth year', or 'Days of 1896', or of 1901, 1908, 1909, 1910 and 1911. For all their passionate intensity, few are in the present tense. Moreover, he is almost pedantically accurate in telling us how much their heroes earn at their work, at cards, or trictrac, or prostitution. No doubt he could have told us what they gave for their pink or mauve shirts—he knew (though he only revealed it in private conversation) how much a yard would have been paid in 31 B.C. for the rose-silk chiton of Caesarian.

And the mood is like that of ancient poetry. If at times one is reminded of Walt Whitman, it is rather to Tibullus and the Greek Anthology that one must look for counterparts to the lovers in his poems—the customer who fumbles the shop-assistant's hand, while he asks with trembling voice about the quality of some cheap handkerchiefs; the young man who goes night after night to a tavern, where he once saw an unknown face; the couple who meet at a tobacconist's window; the other couple who, on a stifling July night, have outsat everyone in the café but one sleeping waiter:

It must have been one o'clock at night,
Or half-past.

In a corner of the tavern
Behind the wooden partition—
Apart from us two, the place completely empty.
An oil-lamp faintly lighted it.
The drowsy servant was dozing by the door.

No one saw us, but already
We were so excited,
That we were in no mood for precautions.

Our clothes were half-open—we didn't wear much
For the divine month of July was blazing.

Pleasure of the body between
The half-open clothes;
Swift baring of the flesh—whose image
Has passed through twenty-six years; and now is come
To rest in this poem.

It must be said frankly that all Cavafy's love-poetry is homosexual. Some naïf readers have mistaken the character of some of the poems. Greek is an inflected language, and can get on without saying 'he' or 'she' all the time. Cavafy would no doubt have rejoiced at the resulting ambiguity in so far as it made his poetry more universal—it would certainly have revolted him to become the object of a special cult. Moreover, many of his poems are as universal in their appeal as any love-poetry of any sort. On the other hand he would have scorned to conceal by any subterfuge what form of the universal passion of love it was that inspired his poetry.

Though he was by nature extremely timid, and had more than his share of the Oriental anxiety about 'what people say', and though in some ways he was almost as tortuous an intriguer as Pope, yet, like Pope, he was essentially a brave and noble character. He risked family troubles, social ostracism, and even the danger of enforced exile from his beloved city, for the sake of his uniquely honest work—and he lived to be not only tolerated but honoured there.

In his work 'the love that dares not speak its name' does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly—neither is it wry and tortured, a misery to itself, and an embarrassment to others, as in *A Shropshire Lad*. Cavafy does not take the disguise Proust took; nor yet does he offer the defence that Proust offered when he spoke out—that all love is a sickness or perversion, and homosexual love only another variety. When people tried to interest him in Proust, he did indeed read the death of the grandmother with rapture—but the famous exordium to *Sodome et Gomorrhe* left him cold. He said it was pre-war and out of date.

Without exhibitionism, and without apology, Cavafy did his readers the honour to assume that their experience would not be too limited for them to understand his form of love, and that they would be too well-read to be shocked at its expression—how little ancient love-poetry is about heterosexual love! He was fully aware of the official disapprobation of religion and

society—he had felt it—but that was another thing.¹ He wrote about the themes ancient Greek and Latin poets wrote about, and wished to be read naturally, as they are read.

He is probably at his best in those poems where he is at the same time a love-poet, and a poet of the Alexandrine past, in the exquisite poems on dead boys of the Hellenistic age. In this age he was, for other reasons, imaginatively most at home—and he could now write of love as freely as Callimachus or Theocritus.

Such are the two poems that follow.

CIMON SON OF LEARCHUS, AGED 22, STUDENT
OF GREEK LITERATURE (IN CYRENE)

'MY end came upon me when I was very happy.
Hermoteles had me for inseparable friend.
The last days of my life, although he pretended
That he wasn't worried, I often noticed
Tears in his eyes. And when he thought that I
Had dozed off a little, like one out of his wits
He fell on the end of my bed. But we were, we two,
Boys of the same age. Twenty-three years old.
Fate is a traitress. But perhaps another passion
Might have taken Hermoteles away from me.
I ended well, in unshared love.'

This epitaph for Marylos, son of Aristodemos,
Who died a month ago in Alexandria,
I received with grief, his cousin Cimon.
The writer sent it me, a poet of my acquaintance.
He sent it me because he knew that I
Was related to Marylos: that is all he knew.
My heart is full of grief for Marylos.
We had grown up together like brothers.
I am very sad. His untimely death
Has done away in me every bit of resentment . . .
Every bit of resentment with Marylos—although
He stole from me the love of Hermoteles.

¹As a man, not as a writer, he had at one time feelings of guilt. Maître Peridis, in his recent book on Cavafy, prints some of the acts of contrition, and good resolutions, recorded on little bits of paper, generally in English, between 1896 and 1912.

So that if Hermoteles should want me back again
It won't be at all the same thing. I know
What a sensitive nature I have. The image of Marylos
Will come between us, and I shall imagine
I hear him saying: 'Well, now you're satisfied;
Now you've got him back, as you wanted, Cimon;
Now you've no longer any cause to slander me.

MYRIS: ALEXANDRIA, A.D. 340

When I heard the bad news that Myris was dead,
I went to his house, although I avoid
Going into the houses of Christians,
Particularly when they have feasts, or are in mourning.

I stood in the passage. I didn't want
To go further inside, because I noticed
That his relations were looking at me
With unconcealed embarrassment and displeasure.

They had put him in a big room
Of which I could see a little from the corner
Where I stood; all precious carpets,
And ornaments of silver and gold.

I stood and cried in a corner of the passage.
And I thought how our meetings and excursions
Would be no more fun without Myris.
And I thought how I shouldn't see him any more
At our lovely, bawdy evenings,
Enjoying himself, laughing, and reciting verses
With his perfect feeling for Greek rhythm;
And I thought how I had lost for ever
His beauty, how I had lost for ever
The boy I passionately worshipped.

Some old women near me began talking softly
About the last day of his life—
The name of Christ continually on his lips,
His hands held a cross—
Then there came into the room four Christian priests
And they made prayers and fervent supplications to Jesus,
Or to Mary (I don't know their religion well).

We knew certainly that Myris was a Christian.
From the first hour we knew it, when,
The year before last, he came into our band.
But he lived absolutely like us,
Of all of us the most abandoned to pleasure,
Recklessly throwing away his money on amusements.
Not caring what people said,
He threw himself eagerly
Into clashes in the streets at night,
When it happened that our band met with rivals.
He never talked about religion.
Oh, yes, once we told him
We'd take him with us to the Serapeum.
But he seemed to be annoyed
At this joke of ours; I remember now.
And two other times now come back to me.
When we were making libations to Poseidon,
He withdrew from our circle, and turned away his face.
When one of us enthusiastically
Said: 'Let our friendship be under
The blessing and protection of the great,
All-beautiful Apollo'—Myris whispered,
(The others didn't hear): 'With the exception of myself.'
The Christian priests with loud voices
Pray for the boy's soul—
I noticed with what care,
And with what intense concentration
On the forms of their religion, everything
Is done at a Christian funeral.
But suddenly a different feeling
Mastered me. I felt, vaguely,
As if Myris had gone from beside me;
I felt that, as a Christian, he was united
With his own people, and I had become
A stranger, a complete stranger; I felt already
A doubt approaching: perhaps I had been mocked
By my passion for him, and I always was a stranger—
I rushed out of their frightful house,
I ran quickly before it was snatched away and altered
By their Christianity—the memory of Myris.

Cavafy's favourite hero was Antony, because he stood for East against West, for Alexandria against Rome, and because he was defeated. *Victrix causa Deis placuit, sed victa Cavafi.*

This is North's version of the passage in Plutarch which inspired his most exquisite poem. It is the last night in Alexandria, before Antony's final defeat:

'Furthermore, the selfsame night within little of midnight, when all the city was quiet, full of fear and sorrow, thinking what would be the issue and end of this war: it is said that suddenly they heard a marvellous sweet harmony of sundry sorts of instruments of music, with a cry of a multitude of people, as they had been dancing and had sung as they use in Bacchus' feasts, with movings and turnings after the manner of Satyrs: and it seemed that this dance went through the city unto the gate that opened to the enemies, and that all the troupe that made this noise they heard, went out of the city at that gate. Now such as in reason sought the depth of the interpretation of this wonder, thought that it was the god unto whom Antonius bare singular devotion to counterfeate and resemble him, that did forsake him.'

THE GOD ABANDONS ANTONY¹

When at the hour of midnight
an invisible choir is suddenly heard passing
with exquisite music, with voices—
Do not lament your fortune that at last subsides,
your life's work that has failed, your schemes that have proved
illusions.

But like a man prepared, like a brave man,
bid farewell to her, to Alexandria who is departing
Above all, do not delude yourself, do not say that it is a dream,
that your ear was mistaken.

Do not condescend to such empty hopes.

Like a man for long prepared, like a brave man,
like the man who was worthy of such a city,
go to the window firmly,
and listen with emotion

but not with the prayers and complaints of the coward
(Ah! supreme rapture!)

listen to the notes, to the exquisite instruments of the mystic choir,
and bid farewell to her, to Alexandria whom you are losing.

¹Translated by GEORGE VALASSOPOULO

LAMBERTO VITALI
CONTEMPORARY
SCULPTORS
VII—MARINO MARINI

WHEN a sculptor who has reached intellectual as well as physical maturity realizes, or thinks he realizes, that the art for whose sake he has spent his life is irrevocably dead, he presents the critic with a case too challenging to be denied. The short book by Arturo Martini, published almost clandestinely in 1945 and reprinted beautifully by Mardersteig with the unchanged title: *La Scultura lingua morta* (*Sculpture, a dead language*) is something more than an artist's desperate and moving confession. After a tortuous crisis Martini's doubts led to absolute negation and he brutally answered his own self-questionings. 'Sculpture is a form of oratory or at best of eloquence. When every mystery and passion from the beginning of the world had been unveiled, sculpture became a pathetic repetition . . . today sculptors merely attempt variations on themes already played to checkmate by the ancients . . . Sculpture, a dead language with no living dialect, can never again be a spontaneous communication between men.' Such statements raise a problem and involve the whole of the contemporary position of sculpture. Martini's conclusions can and ought to be rejected. One only needs to quote what Delacroix wrote as a young man: '*La nouveauté est dans l'esprit qui crée, et non pas dans la nature qui est peinte*', and the rest of his remarks make a distinction between the crisis of the artist and the crisis of art. But when we have put aside the human drama, a real problem still remains.

Sculpture is more restricted by tradition than painting, more confined by the means at its disposal (it has the *limitations barbares* Baudelaire noted) and it tends to be behind painting in its evolution. And just as revolutions in painting are violent and noisy and arouse furious reactions and resentments of the sort that have filled the art chronicles of the last hundred years, in the plastic arts changes just as decisive happen in silence. Yet this insulation of sculpture is more apparent than real. For in reality

and taken by and large, the two are involved in the same preoccupations and problems in the evolution of a civilization's art. The novelty and paradox of developments during the last century have consisted in this: that new discoveries regarding sculpture have often, indeed nearly always, been made by non-sculptors. In this way the gulf between official or rhetorical statuary, and genuine sculpture, has become more and more accentuated. And while so-called pure sculptors remain custodians of a tradition or better of an occupation ever increasingly debased, the painter-sculptors from Daumier to the present day have been free from vicious or shackling preconceptions regarding the exercise of an art which wasn't—and still officially isn't—their own. And one could observe in addition that the same thing has happened in original carving from the time of the romantic adventure till today.

This goes for the men who have given us the means to contradict Martini's contention that sculpture is a dead language. But if at the base of the revolution of the last ten years there is one single need—that of rediscovering pure plastic values (sculpture-as-sculpture, so to say, like painting-as-painting)—a really decisive divergence has become noticeable as regards the *idea* of sculpture. For one group, whatever may be the sacrifices and renunciations, the material and the solutions remain the traditional ones—those from the Venus of Milo onwards. The other group—in a spirit of programmatic purism and frenzied experiment—has seized on the most varied instruments and tried to evoke fresh assonances with the help of a new science of concaves and above all voids.

Henry Moore's sculpture might well be a considered attempt to fuse the two opposing conceptions. That of Marino Marini belongs decisively to the first of them. It is the sculpture of a Tuscan but one whose taste for essential and sometimes bitter forms makes him at home with the romanesque stone-cutters and the masters of the early fourteenth century in Pisa, Lucca and Pistoia. He never, however, lets himself be trapped by the seductions of traditional systems, which would have been easy—I almost put inevitable—for a temperament less full-blooded and lively than his. Those of this family-tree are numerous and diverse, at least in appearance. They always end up with a decided preference for little modulated and closed forms of expression. One could even add that precisely that kind of coherence has

enabled Marini to navigate safely between the hidden rocks of aestheticism—rocks that have sunk many another ship in our time.

The work of Marino Marini, enriched by the additions of the last few years, has now become outstanding and demonstrates his way of thinking in pure form. His procedure shows what his aims are. He sets himself a plastic problem which he develops, elaborates and solves in a series of successive and necessary variations until he reaches final deliverance. He limits himself, at the risk of obsession and apparent monotony, to representation of a few subjects of 'natural architecture' such as female nudes or the magical coupling of horse and rider.

Once Marini had learnt to know himself and shake himself free from bad academic influences and—with a greater effort—from pseudo-modern mannerisms, he always kept to the same beaten track. His point of departure was the work done between 1933 and 1935 and consists of three great wooden statues of male nudes: *Icaro* (Icarus), *Nuotatore* (Swimmer), and *Pugile in riposo* (Prizefighter at rest). All three are motionless—even in the *Icarus* the sense of vertical flight is rendered by simple allusion without even the vaguest hint at the disordered realism of the latter part of the nineteenth century—and all are, so to say, closed within the crudity of contrasting profiles both vertical and horizontal. It is an angular and thorny kind of sculpture which is denied the pacifying pause of a curve. The modelling is dry, rather acid and a-sensual. The same thing reoccurs a little later in the *primi stati*, the 'first statements' of his horses.

Horses made their appearance in Marini's world in the years immediately following. The first *Cavallo e Cavalliere* (Horse and Rider), done in wood in 1936, is a further representation of motionless and rigorously symmetrical bodies. Once again the vertical rigidity of the profiles dominates throughout. The torso of the naked rider is straight, the four legs of the animal are spiny and upright. As I wrote at the time, the horse is the outcome of a strange cross-breeding between the horses on Montelupo vases such as were once used at country fairs in Tuscany, and the terra cotta horses of Chinese sepulchral ware—with perhaps a dash of the archaic foals of the Acropolis. As for the rider he seems a distant descendant of the Sheikh of Cairo. The whole derives from the complex working of very diverse memories. But in the successive

stati these memories little by little disappear in accordance with Marini's typical development. The cerebral idea remains substantially unchanged but is so to speak liberated through the solid fulfilment of his plastic solutions, in the grandiose cadence of the profiles now bent in solemn curves, in the terse synthesis reached by great stages and not only coldly calculated. The process of enrichment is not merely formal and above all it is not casual in so far as it truly reflects an enrichment in Marini the man.

If we compare the 1936 group with the group now being exhibited at the Biennale in Venice we realize how deep the change is. Now the subtle *divertissements* of an earlier period, which came from easy accommodations of the intelligence and an almost 'fashionable' sense of life, have gone and the plastic work has developed quite another significance. The *Arcangelo* in the Basle museum (done in 1943) was enclosed in its heartfelt affliction and made no cry, yet it had singular intensity precisely for that reason. But the new *Cavallo e Cavaliere* with its beautiful and rigid stance, deriving from the contrast between the vertical lines of the human figure and the horizontal line unfolding without pause from the muzzle to the tail of the horse manifests a fresh feeling of tragedy. The horse stretches its neck and has its mane raised in fright as if it had come across a corpse and the man, whose old impassiveness is broken, turns round and raises his head to the sky.

This almost barbaric violence of expression is to be found in the latest female nudes, too, above all in the great *Pomona* (1948) with her experienced head and massive forms with great undulations. The watchful naturalism of an earlier time had resulted in some happy works with graceful touches, such as the *Female Nude* (1938) which was full of springtime and had a rhythmic delicacy of profile in the scarcely hinted movement of the left leg and the light turn of the head. But in the *Pomona* I am now speaking of all subjection to works too distinguished and too near to us to be forgotten has disappeared. The plastic inventiveness is now stronger and more lively. It is now no longer a question of resemblance but of the truth of forms and the free utilization of equivalents in translating the natural object.

This arrogant seizure of the model is not the last reason for Marini's greatness as a portraitist. In times such as ours in which portraiture seems to be becoming a lost art—we have few valid

examples such as Maillol and Lipchitz—it is exceptional for a sculptor, however constant his anxiety to reascend from the particular to the general in the conquest of a plastic absolute, to give such passionate dedication to portraiture. But Marini combines the assurance of a plastic artist with the curiosity of a psychologist. And he has all a Tuscan's quick intuition, irony and malicious astuteness. And so the discovery of the form which is rendered by equivalents and bold abbreviations and distortions goes hand in hand with human discoveries of great freedom and—it must be added—implacable pitilessness. Now that he has freed himself from the restraints of fashionable propriety Marini only looks to rendering the character of the model with an absolutely single-minded search after expression and the pathos of expression. His gallery of heads is by and large worthy of a modern Saint Simon.

So Marini has now entered his age of maturity. He has passed beyond the artist's most dangerous moment, the time when he risks becoming a plagiarist of his own mannerisms through mechanically repeating some formula he found at the dawn of his career. His temperament is a Mediterranean one and reason and the senses are balanced in the equilibrium needed for vitality in a work of art. And his sculpture can accurately be called Mediterranean for it can stand up to the test of the full daylight of the piazza and the garden. Like every exact sculpture it has its exact weight and lives in space according to this weight.

[*Translated by* BERNARD WALL]

C. GIEDION-WELCKER

JAMES JOYCE IN ZÜRICH

JAMES JOYCE stood in a personal and direct relationship to the structure and the myth of cities. They seemed to him like a collective individual, a story in space-dimension, a great coalescence of life. He embraced them from their past to their present as growing organisms, edifices of history built brick by brick. Even when on a temporary visit, he sought to penetrate into the nature and laws of a city's complex substance, and to listen to its eternal

rhythms. To be lord of a city, to hold the threads of its being in his hands, seemed to him direct vitality, and he considered it 'more organic' to be mayor of a town than king of a nation. Just as he could master countless tongues and dialects of the world, so he also knew its wines, dishes and sweetmeats. His interest ranged down to the special cakes of a provincial town, which he carefully fitted, as a regional characteristic apparently due to chance, into the general and coherent unity of landscape and history.

Dublin, Paris, Trieste and Zürich were the cities which played a fateful part in his life. The role of Zürich in this series is no insignificant one. In 1904, when twenty-two years old, he came for the first time to the Swiss town, on his wedding-trip with a handsome wife from Galway. For three weeks he explored, to no avail, the possibility of giving English lessons. A hotel-porter, whose power of persuasion was still vivid to Joyce after many years, directed the pair to a hotel (Speer) in the Lagerstrasse (No. 16), whose proprietor later—a special joke for Joyce—bore the name of Dubliner. Eleven years later Italy's entry into the war led the family, now four members strong, back the same way from Trieste. There followed a four years' sojourn, decisive for the development of the author. Joyce, the teacher of English and the author of *Ulysses*, wandered through Zürich: on the one hand a man tied down and struggling to make a living for his family, and already suffering from his eyes; and on the other a free Greco-Celtic philosopher and 'Phantasus', who out of the continuum of Europe created from the Homeric myth his complex epic of the twentieth century. From the primitive germ-cell of Greece—already in early times linked with his Irish home—arose the modern Europe. The Town became a vessel containing all events since the world began.

The Joyce family occupied several houses during its four-year stay in Zürich, in the Kreuzstrasse, Seefeldstrasse (73) and Universitätsstrasse (38) and (29). To his more intimate circle of Zürich friends belonged Philippe Jarnach, deputy orchestra conductor for Busoni, and the soprano Charlotte Saueremann, with whom the flat in Seefeldstrasse was shared. In addition there were pupils: Edmund Brauchbar, a model segment of the many-sided Leopold Bloom as regards his vitality and feeling for reality and wit, Georges Borach¹, the devoted 'Eckermann', Paul Suter

¹See G. Borach: *Talks with James Joyce*. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 3 May 1931.

and Paul Ruggiero. The English painter and writer Frank Budgen¹, then active at the British Legation, and the actor Claud Sykes and his wife were also there, as well as a number of young Greeks—Greeks were always regarded by Joyce as bringers of good luck and belonged at that time to the atmosphere of *Ulysses*—who lent to the group a national and lingual colour. Here was the variety which had always seemed to him particularly attractive in Switzerland. The constant meeting place during the First World War was the restaurant Pfauen. Later the 'Kronenhalle' became the regular rendezvous, where the Sion Fendant wine, which Joyce christened *Erzherzogin* (archduchess) because of its *Erzgeschmack* (brassy taste); or the Yvorne wine, gradually converted the mood from one of quiet conversation to a plane of joking and phantasy. Joyce's saying: 'Red wine is like beefsteak, white wine like electricity' was analogically applied to his estimation of the human voice, the tenor seeming to him a 'gift of God' a 'supernatural tongue', whilst the bass remained fettered by its healthy stability and the baritone by its beautiful naturalness. He praised the white wine of Switzerland on all occasions (often to the sorrow of his French friends) as the wine par excellence, as a 'hovering summer night's dream'. It was only when the sun had utterly gone down that the spirit of the earth of Switzerland rose for him.

All of the then extant prose works of the poet appeared in the *Rheinverlag* (Basel) between 1926–8, translated into German: *Dubliners*, *The Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*. Switzerland again became the starting-point of his poetic expansion. His only play, *Exiles*, had been published in German by Rascher, Zürich, as early as 1919, a year after the English edition. Spurred by his work on this piece, Joyce had undertaken in 1918 in Zürich to introduce the Swiss public to English drama. Under his direction the 'English Players' was founded. In the Kaufleuten, the Pfauen Theatre and the Lucerne City Theatre, works of Oscar Wilde, Shaw and Synge were performed. *Exiles*, modestly placed last in the Irish series, was never produced, due to an internal dispute between actors and manager. In the Circe chapter of *Ulysses* the battles of this Zürich theatre period received their poetic transformation; and it was in front of the Zürich district court that

¹Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, London, Grayson & Grayson, 1934.

they came to their real conclusion, and that in favour of James Joyce.

Dublin, the *cité suprême*, eternally metamorphic and beautiful, often must have appeared before the voluntary exile in his wanderings by the lake of Zürich; just as to Victor Hugo, the French exile on the sands of Guernsey, Paris arose out of the sea, the distant, beloved town, *inoublable*. Apart from this, however, it was true to Joyce's way of thinking and feeling to always discover new similarities in men, history and landscapes, in spite of his already complete grasp of their individuality. The twelve o'clock Bahnhofstrasse, with the living, singular phenomena of the present, was synthesized with his native Dublin. The camera of his mind was always taking double exposures. Thus the fusion became the presentation of midday city life in that master-chapter of his *Odyssey*.

'What a city!' he would exclaim. 'A lake, a mountain and two rivers.' In this phrase he concentrated the characteristics, richness and universality of Zürich. It is said of Ireland 'Two voices are there, one of the sea and one of the mountains': he often stood contemplating as an event the meeting of the Limmat and the Sihl on his walks by the rivers. The wide lake was for him a mighty, self-evident Being. It lured him, especially in latter years, to frequent water excursions. That he was on these occasions concerned not with nature but above all with art was a fact that one was only later to learn. They were aquatic word-expeditions undertaken in motor-boats. The smell of fish, blue-green colour, misty haze, a bouquet of associations, must be resolved into one word. It was a question of finding this many-headed word, in order to reveal the genius of the place and hour. Whether the poet finally fished this pearl once and for all out of the Zürich lake must be determined from *Finnegans Wake*, of which he was then working out the last paragraphs; at the time, at any rate, he said nothing about it.

He had already woven various word-jokes about Zürich into the section concerning 'Anna Livia Plurabelle'. 'Well, that's the Limmat' (for limit) . . . 'You don't say the silly-post?' (for Sihlpost) . . . and 'legging a jig or so on the sihl . . . There's the Belle for Sexaloitez . . .' betrays the presence of this atmosphere and its witty transformation and translation into a new speech-dimension.

Mumming and folk-plays, all historical cults, were to Joyce in

their penetration of past and present an expression of historical vitality. The *Sechseläuten* (spring festival: literally 'Ringing of six o'clock' was always visited, as he usually stayed in Zürich at this time of the year, and he seismographically registered all of its phases. The watchmen with their wolf-hounds, who attended the last moments of the burning mystic *Bögg* (winter-demon), seemed to him in their sober reality woven into the fantastic symbolism as a special joke.

Once, in a Fendant-mood, he wanted to provide a new stage-setting for the last act of Rossini's *Tell* opera: an apotheosis of Switzerland, represented by countless hotel porters, was to round off the happy ending. Above all the Swiss hotel porter! For Joyce, he was a living information bureau of events of life and of the city, like a daily newspaper; a revelation and source of wit.

As a contrast to the wise and witty side of him, however, there was still a hidden core of primitive nature: the paradox. During thunder storms, richly bestowed by the Zürich summer, he was seized by an elementary mountain-fear, and crept into his hotel in the Bahnhofstrasse 'like the Pope into the Vatican'.¹ The Zürich mountain became a *mont noir* to him when the heavens discharged electricity and, 'like a drunken sailor, indiscriminately hurled down dynamite'.

Days—starting from his religious youth coloured by the changing symbols of the saints—and numbers had a manifold significance and life for him: legendary, historical, magic. All the dates of the calendar were observed according to their content, and the special ones were joyously celebrated. On Fridays a reluctance for travel or any other undertakings reigned. That James Joyce should have been taken ill on a Friday and should have died on the thirteenth of the month, touched all those who knew his attitude.

Joyce had waited impatiently in France to begin his last journey to Switzerland—'that nature preserve-park of the free spirit' as Hugo Ball called it in 1917—after being for many weeks the bewildered witness of a confused and wandering stream of humanity from all lands. 'Here we still know where we stand' he said, looking around him in a panelled Swiss inn a short time after his arrival. Here he died. On his desk lay two books marked

¹His attitude during the bombing dangers of the war in France was quite other and totally different.

with fresh notes: an Irish one by the Irish doctor Oliver St. John Gogarty (Buck Mulligan), *I follow St. Patrick*; and a Greek lexicon. Ireland, Greece, Zürich . . .

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ADAM SORENSEN

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MARQUIS DE CUSTINE

THE Marquis de Custine's letters, published under the title *La Russie en 1839*, are like the travel letters of Erasmus or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, well worth reading for their own sake. But they are more than that. For those Westerners now living in the Soviet Union and trying to understand the fundamentals of that foreign and important polity, Custine has a peculiar value, an intense and often astonishing actuality. It is not merely the facts which he reports so vividly, but also his own reactions that are illuminating. For he reacted to the Russian scene just as so many Westerners do today; and this continuity of reaction has its own historical relevance. Custine, as it were, puts Russia into perspective, seen from the West.

I think the importance of these letters will be clearer if we first look at the outlook and the problems of the people who find them so relevant to their studies. It is very difficult for an individual journalist, or a small diplomatic mission, to form more than an individual opinion, or to cover more than a few aspects of the scene. The insight of these individuals is often keen; and their brains can be picked with profit. But to obtain a wide and deep picture, teamwork is really indispensable. And it is in the sifting process carried on by a large Embassy, with a staff of fifty or more, that Custine is most useful.

It is customary to say of Sophocles that he saw life steadily and saw it whole. And the aim of successful reporting by an Embassy back to a capital (at least where major powers are concerned) must also be to enable the Foreign Office, and the Government, to see the country in question steadily and to see it whole. During

the war there was an uneasy feeling among the professional diplomats of the Western powers that Western diplomacy in the years between the wars had not succeeded in taking the measure of the new authoritarian and conspiratorial organizations that had grown up to the East of them. This produced a more humble and painstaking approach by the Embassies of the Western powers in Moscow to the phenomena of the Soviet Union. Even among some who were not consciously aware of failure, there was at least the realization that relations with Russia would occupy a more important place than they had in the past. Especially in the larger Embassies, where minds are more regularly sharpened against each other, and the fruits of research larger in volume and more inescapable, there was an intensification of individual and collective effort to understand what made the Soviet Union tick, and to send back the results in a form that could be understood and assimilated at home. This increased understanding must be based partly on the evaluation of regular and methodical research and partly on a flair. For this the society of other seekers after truth is most necessary, both in order to widen the scope of the research and in order to eliminate the natural bias and emotion which stimulates but also warps understanding. Fortunately, in the three largest Embassies, those of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, the standards both of scholarship and experience were unusually high.

There were three broad types of emotional approach among the more responsible Western diplomats; and the reaction of any one student to the general scene, and of course to particular occurrences, would usually reflect more than one of these types of emotion. I am not now talking of admiration for Russian feats of arms, satisfaction at the success of an ally, or exasperation over details of diplomatic negotiation. Indeed, the basic types of emotion are clearer in relation to the post-war scene. The first of them is a sense of opposition to Russia and to Bolshevism as forces hostile to the state and the civilization which the student in question professionally represents and to which his loyalties owe. There is then the familiar fellow-travelling attitude, which is in many ways the inversion of the first, and instinctively endorses and justifies whatever phenomena the evolution of Soviet policy may throw up. And lastly there is the attitude of mind sometimes called Trotskyist and sometimes sentimental liberal: an attitude

usually born of disillusion, which reacts against Soviet disregard of those values which Social Democrats strive for, and to most of which lip service is still paid in the Soviet Union. The first of these emotions, patriotic opposition, scarcely involves study of the Soviet Union at all, but merely observation of what appears on the surface; though it may stimulate study. The fellow-travelling emotion usually leads to much information, but scarcely more discernment. With this also goes the emotional belief that collaboration with the Soviet Union can be made easier by acquiring the sort of 'understanding' that suspends the critical faculty. The third emotion, which is sometimes loosely called Trotskyist, is partly a reaction against fellow-travelling by people who remain 'progressive', and usually involves very careful critical study of both Soviet theory and practice. It leads to a sort of theological wrangle combined with emotional horror, in some ways like that of Protestants who while devout Christians objected both to the doctrine of transubstantiation and the practises of the Inquisition. In the course of continuous and intimate discussion with members of the Embassies and certain journalists, variants of these three types of emotion were always present. For this was not a debating society but an attempt to understand what was going on; and in such cases each angle of approach is useful by throwing light on a problem from a different side, so that the scene becomes three-dimensional.

In this struggle to understand and interpret the phenomena of the Soviet world there also arises another question: the element of Russianness. I do not mean the facile generalization, popular during the war years, about Russia having outlived the Revolution and become Russian again. The underlying implication of that idea, namely that the Revolution was somehow not Russian, is as irresponsible as to suggest that the French Revolution was somehow not French. Of course, in one sense it is a truism to say that Russian history is the history of Russia; though even this is sometimes forgotten. Perhaps one comes nearer to the heart of the matter by asking why the Russian Revolution was Russian—that is, why recent Russian history took the form it did. This issue has been carefully examined by professional historians like Professor Sumner, whose invaluable *Aspects of Russian History* traces each aspect of the modern Russian scene back through its Revolutionary and Tsarist phases to its Byzantine and Tartar origins. There

have also been attempts to set out at least certain aspects of Russianism, in such books as Nicholas Berdyaev's *Russian Idea*. That is one side of the balance. But while the fact of Russia conditions and indeed determines all Russian history, it is obviously impossible to study Communism in Russia by reference to the Russian scene alone. This would be true even if Communism had developed in Russia by a sort of parthenogenesis, which is not the case. This idea used sometimes to be expressed in discussions in Moscow by the formula that Russiandom does not explain Sovietry, however Russian Sovietry may be.

It is on this problem of Russianness that Custine's book sheds an especially valuable light. It was always clear in discussions what an advantage in perspective those people had who had already lived awhile in Russia a decade or so before. They had a better flair for what was ephemeral and what was more permanent, both in Stalinist theory and Soviet practice. Custine showed us all how the Russian scene struck an observer, not a decade, but a century ago. When one is living in a country in order to study it, one's deductions and inferences are drawn to a large extent from a mass of small observed facts. Custine, by recording the corresponding facts of his time and his reactions, presents modern resident observers with the material on which they are used to working in its most relevant and striking form; in a way that no historian, no philosopher, with their distilled answers, can hope to do. Custine was a Westerner, an unusually shrewd and sensitive observer. As a result, his observations had a peculiar relevance, especially to the question of what was permanent, what was Russian, in the Soviet scene. It was a strange and repeated experience for a Western diplomat to formulate a tentative conclusion, or to exclaim in a moment of favourable or hostile prejudice, and then to have a very recognizable echo read out by someone who knew his way about the four volumes of Custine.

As I have tried to explain above, it is even an advantage for an observer to have emotional reactions. They can be discounted in any case; and they light the scene from the side. But in a historical context their usefulness lies in actually showing what existed in the past to produce in a Westerner those reactions which we are familiar with today.

Astolphe de Custine was born in 1790 near Sarrebourg, when his father was twenty and already engaged on diplomatic

missions to German princes. Being a Girondin in politics, the father was guillotined during the Terror, and the Marquise thrown into prison. Astolphe grew up in the Napoleonic Age, a man of few illusions, a keen and mercilessly truthful observer, but with certain basic ideas about the independence and dignity of the individual. His writings show him clearly belonging to the generation of Vigny and Stendhal. He tried soldiering and diplomacy, but soon became contemptuous of them. He preferred to travel, observe, and think. Clairvoyant is the word contemporaries used about him. He regarded himself as a sincere Catholic—but also a child of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. In some ways his mind corresponds with that of the ‘Trotskyist-liberal’ of today. Custine started with no bias against ‘monarchy’ or benevolent despotism. Indeed, he went to find arguments in favour of Russia; but he was shocked by the theory and practice of what he saw. In his preface he says: ‘I went to Russia to find arguments against representative government, but I have come back a partisan of constitutions. A mixed government is not the most favourable for action . . . It is that which most helps production and which procures the maximum of well-being and wealth for the population; above all, it is that which gives the greatest stimulation to practical ideas: and finally, it ensures the independence of the citizen, not by lofty sentiments, but by the processes of law; indeed, these are great compensations for great disadvantages.’ And later: ‘I can’t deny it, I am bringing back from my travels ideas which were not mine when I started out.’ How many Westerners have echoed this in our day, from André Gide to the Spanish Communists recently smuggled out of the Soviet Union by Argentine diplomats in packing cases.

Custine’s book was too shrewd and too outspoken not to provoke a scandal. But the Russians have always taken it seriously, and it has frequently been republished there. The last retranslation into modern Russian, published in Moscow in 1930, describes it rather astonishingly as ‘the most intelligent book published on Russia by a foreigner’. The Editions de la Nouvelle France have just brought out an abridged edition in Paris under the title *Lettres de Russie*. I have never seen the English translation, which was published in London in 1843.

Those Westerners who have not lived in Russia will not feel the excitement of finding in the pages of Custine the continual

echo of so much that they themselves have thought and felt, or at least heard others say. But the question of the Russiandom in Soviety is so important that the following quotations may prove stimulating in themselves as well as providing an introduction to what is certainly one of the most intelligent books on Russia.

‘The Russian Government is the discipline of a camp substituted for the order of a city; it is a state of siege made into the normal state of society.’

‘While other nations have tolerated oppression, the Russian nation has loved it—and still loves it.’

(OF THE AUTOCRAT:) ‘You can never for one moment forget this single man through whom Russia thinks, forms opinions and lives; this man, the mind and conscience of his people, who plans, estimates, controls and distributes everything which is necessary and which may be permitted to other men. He replaces their reason, will, imagination and passion; for no creature is allowed to breathe, to suffer, to fall in love, or to live at all outside the lines laid down for it by the supreme wisdom.’

‘No-one has been more struck than I by the greatness of the Russian people, and by their political importance. The high destiny in store for this country preoccupied me during the whole of my stay there. In the mass the Russians seem to me great even in their most disturbing vices; as individuals they seem likeable . . . But these Orientals, accustomed as they are to breathing and spreading the heaviest incense of flattery, who always take themselves seriously when they praise one another, only react to blame. Any hint of disapproval seems to them treason; they dub every painful truth a lie . . . If they did not convert me to their religions (and they have several of which their political religion is not the least intolerant), if on the contrary they modified my absolutist ideas away from despotism and towards representative government, they will feel offended by the very fact that I do not agree with them.’

(CONVERSATION WITH A WESTERNIZED PRINCE K—, WHO SAYS:) ‘You will hardly be able to grasp the profound intolerance of the Russians. Those with trained minds and those who have business contacts with the West take great pains to hide their dominant idea, which is the triumph of Greek Orthodoxy—the synonym in their case for Russian policy. If you leave this

idea out of the picture, nothing makes sense either in our way of life or in our policy. Do not imagine, for instance, that the persecution of Poland springs from the personal feelings of the Emperor; it is the result of cold and profound calculation. The Holy Ghost illuminates the Sovereign to the point of raising his soul above any regard for human feelings. If you see things that way, the judge and executioner become holier the more ferocious they are.'

'This is a strange country, which only produces slaves who receive on their knees the opinions manufactured for them, spies who have none in order the better to grasp those of others, and cynics who exaggerate the ill. The profession of mystifier of foreigners is known only in Russia, and it helps us to guess at and understand the state of society in this singular land. These people, deprived of leisure and of will, seem like mere bodies without souls; and one shudders to think of such a great multitude of arms and legs with only one head. Despotism is a compound of impatience and laziness; with a little more restraint on the part of the authorities, and a little more activity on the part of the people, the same result could be obtained at much less cost; but what would become of tyranny then? Tyranny is the *maladie imaginaire* of peoples; the tyrant disguised as a doctor persuades them that health is not the natural condition of men . . . and so he nourishes the ill under the pretext of curing it. The social order costs too much in Russia for me to admire it.'

'When one arrives in Russia one sees almost immediately that a society, ordered as it is there, is something fitted only to their ways. One must be a Russian to live in Russia, and yet on the surface all seems the same as anywhere else. The only difference is in the fundamentals.'

'People and government, here everything is in unison. The Russians would not renounce the triumphs of will-power of which they are the witnesses, the accomplices and the victims, even if it was a question of bringing back to life all the slaves which these triumphs have cost . . . not a single voice is raised against the choir to put the claims of humanity against the miracles of autocracy. One can say of the Russians, great and small, that they are drunk with slavery.'

(OF THE SPARTAN QUARTERS OF PETER THE GREAT:) 'This glorious austerity is the measure of the period and the country as

well as of the man. This was a time when everything in Russia was sacrificed to the future, and when buildings which were too magnificent were built for the coming generation.'

'In Russia despotism always operates with a mathematical rigour; and the result of this extreme thoroughness is an extreme oppression. Seeing the harsh effects of this inflexible policy one is disturbed, and one wonders with horror how it comes about that there can be so little humanity in the ways of man. But one's horror does not lead to contempt: for one does not despise what one fears.'

'Russian despotism does not only count ideas and feelings as nothing, but it remakes the facts, it enters the lists against the evident, and triumphs in the struggle.'

(OF A DISGRACED STATESMAN:) 'Monsieur de Repnin used to rule the Empire and the Emperor. Monsieur de Repnin was disgraced two years ago, and during these two years Russia has not heard this name pronounced which formerly was on every mouth. He fell in one day from the pinnacle of power into the deepest darkness: nobody dares remember him or even believe in his existence, not his existence in the present but even in the past. In Russia, when a Minister falls, his friends become deaf and blind.'

'I notice that I am feared here because they know that I write what I think. No foreigner can set foot in this country without feeling himself immediately weighed and judged. "He is an honest man," they think, "therefore he may be dangerous."'

'The more I see of Russia, the more I understand why the Emperor forbids Russians to travel abroad, and makes his own country difficult for foreigners to visit. The political regime in Russia would not survive twenty years of free communication with the West of Europe. Do not listen to the boasts of the Russians; they mistake sumptuousness for elegance, luxury for politeness, the police and fear for the foundations of society.'

'The death penalty does not exist in this country except for the crime of high treason. Nevertheless there are certain criminals whom they want to put to death. This is how it is done. . . .'

'A traveller who let himself be indoctrinated by people in this country could go from one end of the Empire to the other and then return home without having done anything more than pass

between rows of façades. That is what would please my hosts, I can see.'

'All things combine to make Moscow, every summer evening, a city unique in the world: this is neither Europe nor Asia; it is Russia, and it is her heart.'

'Peter I and Catherine II have given to the world a great and useful lesson for which Russia has paid the price. They have shown that despotism is never so much to be feared as when it claims to be doing good, for then it considers that its intentions can excuse its most revolting acts; and the evil inflicted as a remedy knows no bounds.'

These observations are scattered through Custine's descriptions of his travels. And they gain in directness and authenticity by not being formulated into an ordered political conclusion, but by being rooted in the narrative alongside comments on the state of the roads or the Empress's wardrobe.

It is true that this is Russia seen through the eyes of the West. And this, which gives the letters their special value for students, perhaps also gives them an interest for the layman. For the Western view of Russia is all he can hope to attain; and even if he reads translations of Dostoevski and Chekov, he will achieve little more than a Western view of how the Russians see themselves. And, indeed, the student who spends years at the task, even if he is able to divorce himself completely from the question of the relevance of Russia to his own world, can still hardly escape the climate of his mind. Perhaps, too, Custine's letters have become especially useful now that we are beginning to realize how little we know of the setting of Soviet Communism. We are maybe just waking up from seeing in Russia the image of our own intimate wishes and nightmares, our own romanticism and guilt, and becoming aware of an alien and expanding reality. So we may all be glad to look round Russia with the cool, dispassionate Parisian eyes of Custine. For such books are rare: as André Malraux says, '*On ne voit pas plus un pays où s'incarne un mythe auquel on croit qu'on ne voit une femme qu'on aime*'.

SELECTED NOTICE

Jean-Paul Sartre: Existentialism and Humanism. Translation and Introduction by Philip Mairet. Methuen. 5s.

Interest in a philosophical work often decreases as one gets towards the end; once the main points have been grasped, enlargement of the themes frequently seems mere repetition: that is not the case with this English presentation of Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*. The French title must be quoted, for its rendering in English 'Existentialism and Humanism' does not convey the character and tone of the booklet. Indeed, Mr. Philip Mairet, responsible for the translation and introduction, has somewhat betrayed the author's thought and purpose; it is a pity that Mr. Mairet should have reinterpreted the title of the book as, on the whole, he has succeeded in giving us an English version reproducing faithfully the original and its unusually economical style.

In the sometimes dusty library of existential textbooks, *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* is a polemical work, full of Sartre's acute awareness of contemporary problems. *De l'existentialisme de guerre*. It may be, secondarily, a vulgarization, a popularization of the author's philosophical approach and methods, but, first and foremost, it is a piece of applied existentialism.

The important pages in this booklet are not so much those which reproduce Sartre's lecture—and one must keep in mind that this is a lecture if one is to apprehend the atmosphere which it creates and the school-master intonation which Sartre often adopts—but those which give us a summary of one of the many public discussions which Sartre has had with his opponents. In this case it is with a distinguished Marxist philosopher, Mr. Pierre Naville. In the lecture, Sartre wishes to answer criticisms from the philosophical right and left, i.e. Marxists and Catholics. He does less and more than that. He forgets the latter and concentrates on the former. But first he provides a clear and lively explanation of the main concepts of his existentialism, avoiding almost completely technicalities and philosophical jargon. He defines existence and essence, redefines subjectivity, liberty and responsibility. He develops and traces the limits of terms which frighten the layman such as anguish, abandonment, despair. Sartre wants to show what they are not, much more than what they are. He examines their meanings in relation to action, as conditions of action. That is why he so quickly gets into Marxism. One cannot hope to summarize Sartre's philosophy and this is one aim which does not belong to this book. Existentialism, as Sartre says himself, is intended strictly for technicians and philosophers. Those who want to learn something about the structure of Sartre's philosophy and its relations to his ethics can toil through *L'Être et le Néant*. It is useless to think that *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* will be sufficient. Anyone can cope with the *Foundations*, but that does not dispense with the *Critique*. That is why Mr. Mairet's sin is great: he seems to assume that this is a ready-made digest of the most recent type of atheistic existentialism, and he prefaces it with a very competent but irrelevant historical outline. Works of that kind, e.g. Paul Foulquié's *Short History of Existentialism*, have been or will be published in English. What is needed here is not a pseudo-academic dissertation on the school in general, that we shall soon have in Everybody's, but a

straightforward sketch of what Sartre stands for in France today; particularly in the field of politics, as, directly or indirectly, that is what the lecture and the discussion mainly deal with. Mr. Mairet should have given some details about the questions raised here; for instance, he should have mentioned the innumerable debates which went on after the Liberation between Marxists and existentialists. Sartre represents a political group, important as one of the many third forces, though perhaps small and inadequately self-defined, on the theoretical level, for its motto: 'Prolétaires et hommes libres de tous les pays, unissez-vous!' is vague, not to say puzzling. Mr. Mairet, of course, may have overlooked this. One would not dare to suggest that it is the result of an innocent ignorance of the French political scene, though translating or anglicizing U.D.S.R. (Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance) by Union des Socialistes Républicains reveals an unfortunate misinformation. This is amusing as almost every political group in France claims some affinity with Socialism, and the exclusive privilege of being truly republican and the honour of building No. IV. It is also interesting to see that some Englishmen as well as many Frenchmen shyly forget or coyly avoid the word resistance. It may significantly symbolize Mr. Mairet's outlook and it certainly completes his Joadian assertion that 'most philosophy is not even wisdom after the event, but only wisdom about wisdom and little to do with any event'. What would the particular dissecting innocence of the Cambridge philosophers—and Sartre—do with this?

Not only is a factual knowledge necessary to see the links of Sartre's essay with the discussion which follows it, but one has to place them together, in a threefold theoretical perspective. First that of existentialism itself.

One may agree on philosophical or, simply, conventional or linguistic grounds, that existence precedes essence and one may also feel convinced somehow, that men are responsible in one or several senses, but the blunt assertion, that 'if . . . it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is' can hardly be admired as a convincing proposition. The first clause, to imply the second, would need supplementation; but Sartre takes it for granted. It would not matter much in this booklet which has to be a little dogmatic at some stages, but the elaborate and exhaustive chapter dealing with this very same subject of liberty and responsibility in *L'Être et le Néant* suffers from similar arbitrariness. The same logical objections, and others of a psychological order, arise when one comes, for instance, to: 'Feeling is formed by the deeds that one does; therefore I cannot consult it as a guide to action.' Many such propositions can be selected in this work, and on examination, found to be connected loosely, if at all. This often occurs because Sartre deduces values from statements of fact; indeed Sartre's selections and interpretations of the latter and the misunderstandings or refusal to assent on the part of the reader are due to the almost constant mixture of philosophy and morals and of ethical psychology and morals.

On an eminently empirical psychology which sums up its conception of personality in: 'Man is nothing else but what he purposes; he exists only in so far as he realizes himself; he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is', Sartre constructs a flexible system of moral commands which in turn are said to follow from a few concepts such as freedom: if the initial ideas are accepted the rest may be granted. This is partly the old

dream so dear to the nineteenth century of taking some science as the foundation of a moral system; Sartre has performed a sleight of hand: his science is a phenomenological psychology. This in itself is justifiable and acceptable, but what is not is that Sartre should present his moral code as necessary whereas it is strictly contingent. Moreover, though he does mention the subject of aesthetics and ethics, he does not go sufficiently far to exhibit the common characteristics of an ethical and of an aesthetic proposition. One feels that Sartre could defend his general philosophy from the attacks of modern empiricists but at the same time it is very doubtful whether the ethical parts would survive analysis. And for a thinker so deeply interested in moral problems on every level this is a partial failure. Sartre, however anti-rationalistic he may be, suffers from that school's fear of finding that a moral code is not respectable if it has not some necessary value. If a moral criterion is arbitrary nothing can invalidate its thus self-created value. And Sartre provides a few criteria: determined to give them flesh and blood, knowing that 'principles too abstract break down when we come to defining action', and deciding to give some genuine moral tools, he announces that he will 'call cowards those who hide from . . . total freedom, in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuses'—this goes for a wide range of his contemporaries, from his uncommitted academic colleagues to all who deceive and forgive themselves with 'circumstances', poor health, lack of money, etc. . . . Sartre pursues his classification with: 'Others, who try to show that their existence is necessary, when it is merely an accident of the appearance of the human race on earth, I shall call scum' (*salauds*). That applies to the great majority of prophets and pontiffs today, from those who perpetually gargle with man's unhappy condition and indulge in pessimistic, easy considerations, to those who talk of *la Mission de la France* or those who feel entitled to pepper their writings or justify their actions with historical inevitability. But more than anything else these appellations point to the most important fact of Sartre's outlook; one of the most impartial thinkers of our time, he is willing to consider every point of view and understand every excuse, but one thing he will not accept: intellectual dishonesty in the form of overt contempt for human beings. Furthermore, as a philosopher he never forgets that philosophy is a part of life, and not vice-versa.

The second perspective is that of Marxism; we know that the discussion which concludes the book arose during the period of flirtation between existentialists and Marxists and that it centres around an article which Sartre published in an extremely vital unofficial Communist weekly, *Action*. In that incisive and much discussed document (which, incidentally, ought to have been used here, in the English edition), Sartre attempted to show that existentialism did for man what Marxism did for society, e.g. liberate him, give him freedom by showing him where and how liberty was to be found. The English reader should know about this if he is to understand Mr. Naville's insistence on showing that existentialist premises are not only incompatible with Marxist principles but that they also contradict them. Whereas Sartre, knowing how much his philosophical outlook owes to Marxism, believes that he has assimilated its method, Communist theoreticians are anxious to show that on the purely philosophical level as well as on the practical one of daily political issues, it is a question of choice between Marxism and existentialism and not of synthesis.

Sartre's type of '*marxisme dépassé*' has been examined, rejected, and copiously insulted by the French Communist Party. Four years ago, to the latter, Sartre was suspect but honest; today his wickedness is undoubted; to those who once had almost friendly debates with him, it now seems certain that he is product of superintellectualism: the only doubtful point is whether he is purely a *petit bourgeois* or a *quarante-huitard* of a highly muddled type, or both. Does he belong to the social-democrat traitors and failures, or to the American camp? To a member of the Party who has once and for all decided that these are the same and that there is no such thing as the Third Force, the answer is unquestionably: both.

The last and most illuminating part of the book illustrates these points. Mr. Naville puts a fair question in an unfair manner. The fair question is: will not Sartre's doctrine present itself as a resurrection of Liberalism? The unfair, or more exactly question-begging form, is that Mr. Naville assumes not only that old Liberalism is unacceptable—that, as a Marxist, is his right and duty—but also that the values which it stands for, summed up in his own words as 'the dignity of man, the eminent value of personality', are doomed and false, an idea which is not to be accepted as going necessarily with Marxism. After all, what does alienation of liberty, etc., mean? Need one fear the word liberalism because, in France, it is charged with such tepid emotive content and calls up a sense of guilt in anyone accused of it? But Sartre, here, seems to follow the common rule, for he does not deal with that specific point, perhaps because he, too, finds the word distressing. It is unfortunate that his answers to Mr. Naville's indictment lapse very quickly into more or less technical disputes. Arguments about the evolution of the significance of human nature and condition and on causality are fruitful, but they cannot be dealt with as quickly as they are in this dialogue. The two philosophers, carefully avoiding answering one another's questions, talk at cross purposes. The conclusion of the discussion is disappointing and reminds one of what happens to a Brains' Trust pressed for time.

The third perspective, which indeed covers the other two, is that of humanism. Sartre does not succeed in defining exactly his use of the word or, rather, he defines it negatively, saying that it is not one of the Man-is-magnificent type. He takes this position because he says that 'an existentialist will never take man as the end since man is still to be determined'. The reason for rejecting this humanism of gratuitous glorification may be much simpler: either because end is a very complicated idea, less simple than common sense thinks, or because ends are means. Thus Sartre leaves one finally unsatisfied. That may be because the humanism of our age, as expressed in human affairs, will not lend itself to the terminology of any one school. Thus one can say that Sartre's existentialism is humanistic in the sense in which one can say that Fascism is not, in the sense in which one can say that Russell's philosophy is. Sartre also contends that Communism is not—any more. But this is one of today's problems.

Nowadays, moralists and philosophers seem incapable of 'thinking the world' of facing situations either intellectually or practically, of using words to qualify events. Sartre at least is not afraid of deciding. He explains his choice after giving a description, in order to act. On all continents, within all social groups and sub-groups, men seem to have forgotten a dictum as old as Heraclitus, that man's character is his fate. That is Sartre's preaching. And, even if this were his only achievement, we should be grateful.

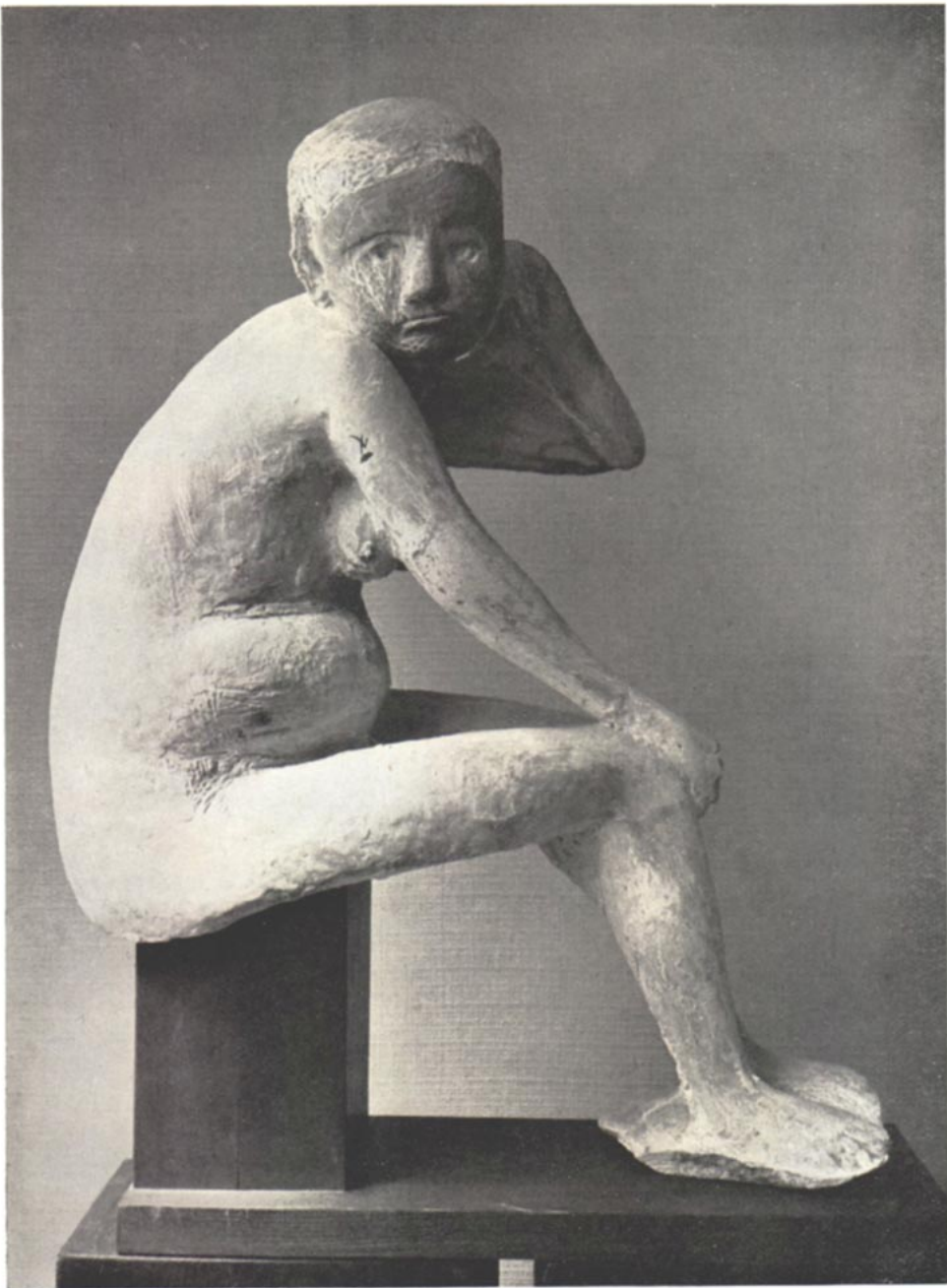
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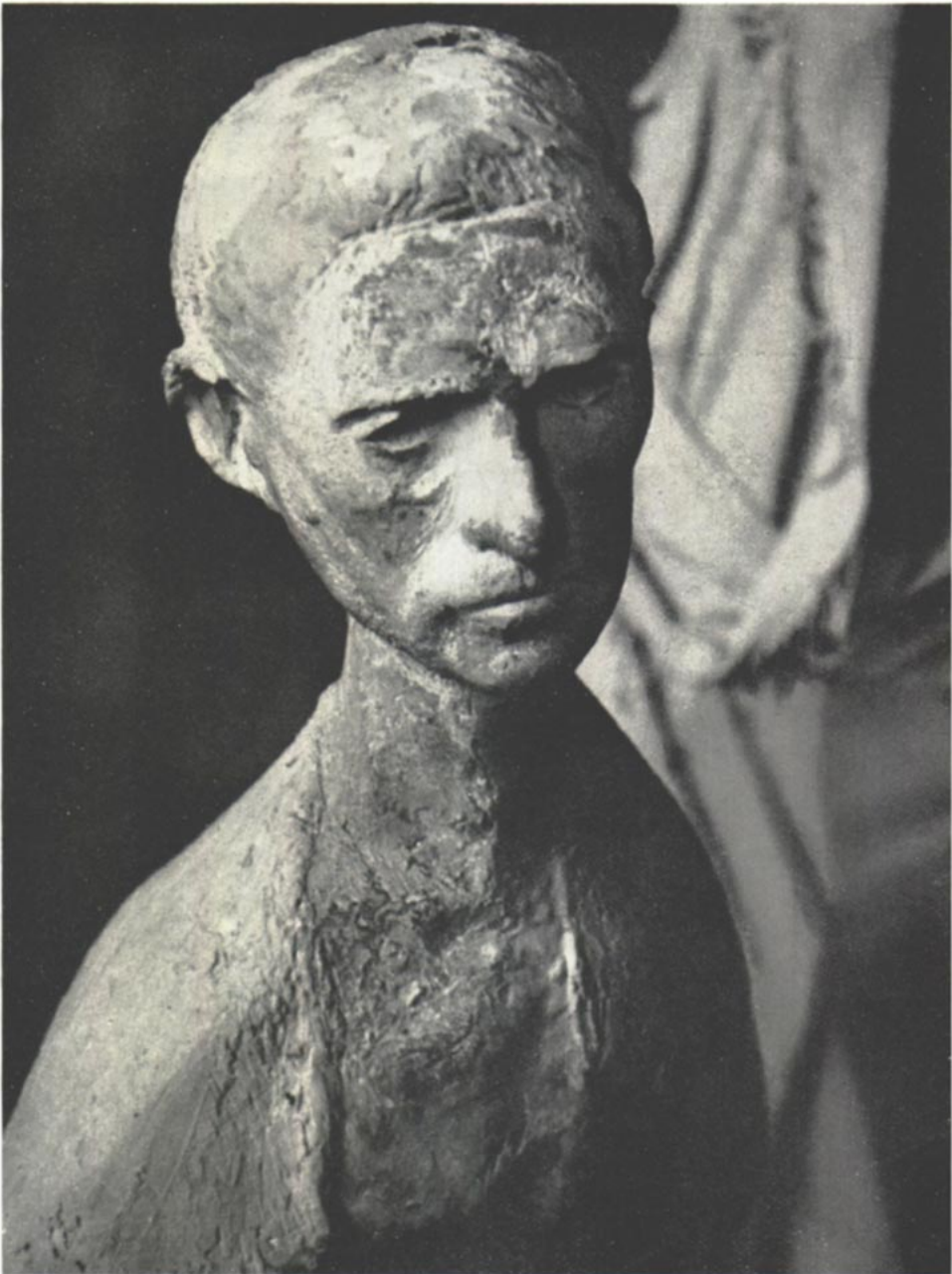
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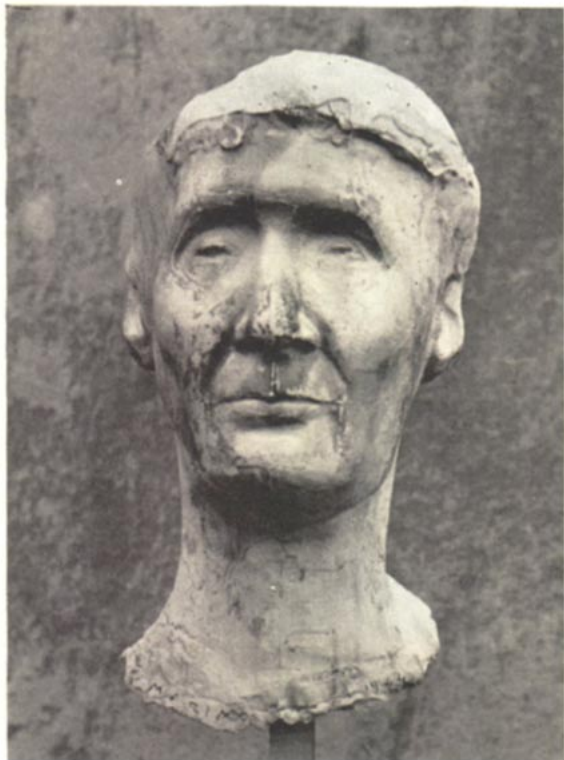


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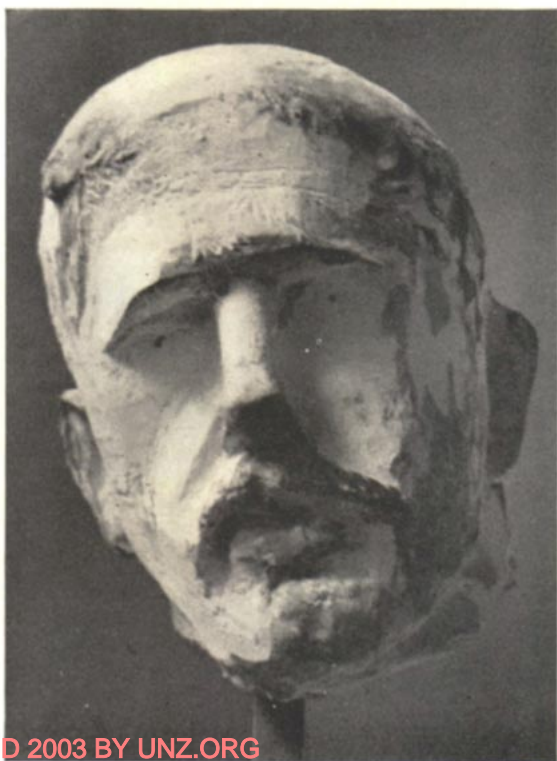
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